

REPUBLISHED FROM ORIGINAL RESEARCH CONDUCTED FOR THE 2014 WELCOA TRAINING SUMMIT

Preventing Job Stress

James E. Porter

Republished from original research conducted for the 2014 WELCOA National Training Summit: Stress@Work. March 2014. Copyright James E. Porter 2014.

Part I: How Can We Create A Model For Managing And Preventing Stress That Works?

No major health victory has EVER been achieved without prevention. We can only fix one person at a time when they are already sick. But we can PREVENT illness by the millions. Sanitation and vaccines provided the first major public health victories. Could simply changing a person's attitudes toward unhealthy behaviors like stress provide the next? If so, is there a precedent for this type of across-the-board attitude change already in existence?

Less than half a century ago doctors and nurses smoked IN hospitals, expectant mothers smoked while pregnant, underage students smoked IN high schools and adults of all kinds smoked on planes, in restaurants, in offices, around children, and even in other people's houses who didn't smoke!

Obviously our attitudes toward smoking have changed dramatically. But this change didn't just happen overnight. People had to be taught and convinced that this was an unhealthy behavior. The evidence had to be made crystal clear. Even the rights of non-smokers needed to be recognized.

Unfortunately, we haven't had the same success trying to change people's attitudes toward stress, at least so far. In fact, you could say: We are today with stress, where we were with smoking 50 years ago. The sad truth is that people get stressed more than ever and their stress is affecting them in ways they might not even realize! Mothers get stressed while pregnant (and the stress

chemicals are passed across the placenta and permanently alter the life of that newborn child. Children get stressed in schools, (resulting in test anxiety and reduced attention) and adults of all kinds get stressed on planes, (air rage) while driving, (road rage) while firefighting, policing or defending our country, (PTSD) while attending to the sick, (compassion fatigue) and certainly while doing ANY type of work (job stress and burnout).

Stress has reached epidemic proportions and most people barely seem to notice or even care: Just as it was with smoking 50 years ago. And just like with smoking, there's second-hand stress, too. The difficult boss; the violent co-worker; the angry customer; the aggressive driver. All are happy to share their stress with innocent bystanders.

The American Psychological Association (APA) has been trying to raise awareness about the dangers of stress for over a decade now. Since the year 2007, the APA has been conducting "The Stress in America" survey which has been an excellent source of information about how pervasive a problem stress has become in our culture. Dr. Norman Anderson, Executive Vice President of the APA warns, "stress has the potential to become the next public health crisis." And the APA's survey shows that much of our stress occurs *while on the job*.

According To The Latest American Psychological Association Survey:

The number one source of stress in the U.S. is job stress followed by financial stress and work-life balance.

More than one-third of American workers experience chronic work stress.

Almost two-thirds (65 percent) of U.S. adults cite work as a significant source of stress.

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the author's and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Wellness Council of America (WELCOA).

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Half of the workers surveyed said that they had experienced loss of productivity as the result of stress.

Over half stated that they didn't use their allotted vacation time and considered looking for a new job because of stress.

1 in 4 Americans reported that job demands interfere with their ability to fulfill family or home responsibilities.

If the number one source of stress in America is job stress, one would naturally assume that it would be in the best interest of American businesses to try and correct this problem, right? Unfortunately, this hasn't been the case. The American workplace has been slow to take up the banner of stress management for a number of reasons:

- 1. It's not our problem.** Many organizations feel that stressed-out employees get stressed at home and bring their stress to work. The company line is that stress management is the worker's responsibility, not the organization's.
- 2. No perceived benefit.** Why spend money on stress management when there is little or no *perceived* benefit from doing so? Better to train people how to sell better or do their jobs more effectively. The thinking here is these other forms of training directly affect the bottom line and stress management training does not (even though stress may be undermining performance in both of these areas).
- 3. Stress is part of the job.** *Jobs are supposed to be stressful.*

Thankfully, not all organizations take this position. The history of stress management in the workplace begins with the influence of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) which saw the first-hand damage that stress could do. EAPs were started at forward-thinking companies like IBM in the 1950s to help employees deal with personal problems like alcoholism. Now EAPs deal with a broad range of problems and they see clearly how stress affects the company's bottom line.

EAPs KNOW the high cost of replacing workers lost to stress-related health issues like substance abuse, behavioral problems, and

even sudden cardiac death. Heart disease, which not so long ago was a disease confined mostly to men, is now shared by women. It's no coincidence that as women have moved into the workforce over the last few decades, the rise in heart disease in women has occurred in increasing numbers over this same time period. This amazing epidemiological fact is dramatic evidence of why the workplace is the FIRST PLACE we should address the issue of stress.

Heart disease alone is the biggest killer in the U.S. by far. It takes more lives than the next three killers on the list (cancer, stroke, and lung disease) combined! A major risk factor for heart disease is STRESS. For people who don't smoke and eat a relatively healthy diet, and are not obese, stress may be the number one lifestyle risk factor when it comes to heart disease.

Lifestyle risk factors are risk factors that people CAN control. *Genetic risk factors can't be controlled.* If one's father or mother died at a relatively young age of heart disease, that's a risk factor that can't be controlled. *But one's reaction to stress can be controlled.* And since the majority of adult stress occurs on the job, that makes MANAGING STRESS AT WORK a more important priority than ever.

The American Heart Association estimated that the cost of cardiovascular disease in 2009—in terms of hiring and training new employees to replace those who died—was \$475.3 billion. That's just the cost of heart disease.

Stress has also been associated with seven out of 10 of the leading causes of death in the U.S.

- Heart attack
- Cancer
- Stroke
- Suicide/homicide
- Accidental death
- Liver disease
- Lung disease

These are all diseases with a stress component to them. That means that stress contributes to the disease process without

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

necessarily causing it. What we know for sure is that chronic unrelenting stress leads to chronic disease. Dr. Norman Anderson of the APA confirms: “Various studies have shown that chronic stress is a major driver of chronic illness which in turn is a major driver of increased health care costs in this country.” *Containing health care costs is yet another reason why organizations need to address the subject of stress.*

In addition to contributing to chronic disease which can stop work altogether; stress can greatly hamper a person’s ability to work also. Signs and symptoms of stress that can affect a worker’s output include tension headaches, migraine headaches, back pain, neck pain, fatigue, depression, upset stomach, agitation, having a short fuse, and the inability to focus. Any one of these stress-related health issues can really slow a person down and greatly diminish his or her level of productivity.

With the advent of technologies like mobile phones and other wireless devices that make it hard to get away from work and that lead to even further distraction and increased tension, it’s no wonder that in certain areas of the country stress levels are at an all time high.

There’s another even more insidious aspect to all this over-dependence on technology. It creates a stream of work that is never ending so there’s rarely the sense of completion at the end of each work day. In addition, our technology is leading to sedentary lives where we spend eight hours a day sitting in an office chair and we engage in passive forms of entertainment at night like watching sports and listening to music. Remember the good old days when people *played* sports and *played* instruments? It may be that it’s our sedentary lifestyles—encouraged by technology—that are leading us to atrophy, inactivity, and weight gain.

New research confirms that managing stress may hold the key to overcoming a wide variety of health problems associated with lifestyle risk factors like smoking, poor diet, and lack of exercise. It turns out that our ability to resist these unhealthy temptations may hinge on our ability to manage stress. In other words, usually when we start a diet, start an exercise plan, or quit smoking and then fall off the wagon, the reason we do so is because of stress. As a result, stress management has gone (like Cinderella) from being the ugly, often-overlooked step child of the wellness world to the *belle of the ball*.

The main keynote addresses at this past year’s National Wellness Conference and the American Journal of Health

Promotion Conference (AJHP) focused largely on the subject of stress. Michael Roizen, director of Wellness at The Cleveland Clinic said this at the AJHP conference: “don’t *wait* to address the issue of stress like Mike (his co-author and friend Dr. Memhet Oz) and I did. Do it first.” At the National Wellness Conference in Wisconsin the closing keynote address was built on a brilliant four-step process for eliminating stress delivered by Daniel Friedland, MD, who wrote a best-selling book entitled *Evidence Based Medicine*. He showed the famous Yerkes Dodson Optimal Performance curve and explained how with his method stress management and productivity go hand in hand.

Even behavioral change expert, Dr. James Prochaska, who often speaks at AJHP, agrees on the importance of managing stress: “Whenever people relapse into their old unhealthy behavior patterns, they do so because of stress.” The general consensus amongst the experts is you can’t really even begin to think about making ANY healthy lifestyle changes until you address the topic of stress management *first*.

Stress is not only directly and indirectly linked to diseases that affect our productivity, it’s also a source of many behavioral problems that can affect a whole department or an entire organization. In fact, much of the behaviors that are so problematic in business today are DIRECTLY related to workers trying to cope with excessive amounts of stress.

Organizational problems associated with job stress include:

- Violence in the workplace
- Poor customer service
- Conflict between workers
- Errors in judgment contributing to poor output
- Absent-mindedness
- Accidents
- Absenteeism
- Presenteeism
- Turnover

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

So what can we do about this ever-increasing load of stress at work? Occupational psychologists suggest a three-level strategy (see below) designed to eliminate job stressors in the first level, teach stress management in the second level and administer care to employees with stress-related illness in the third level.

Occupational Stress Management Model

Level 1. Primary Prevention: Requires across-the-board changes in how the organization hires, promotes, manages, trains, and protects its employees.

Level 2. Secondary Prevention: Teaches employees stress management strategies to address the stress they already have.

Level 3. Tertiary Prevention: Helps employees, one employee at a time, deal with stress-related health and behavioral problems.

While these three levels are all considered *prevention strategies*, only the first level is truly preventative. In level two, to use the language of occupational psychologists, “a person’s stress is considered asymptomatic, but it’s already in place.” And in level three, stress-related health concerns are full blown. Medical issues like depression, high blood pressure, gastro-intestinal problems, and heart disease as well as behavioral health issues like drinking, substance abuse, free-floating hostility, and violence are dealt with on a case-by-case basis, one person at a time.

There’s nothing *preventative* at all about level three.

This leaves level one as the only truly preventative step. Thus, primary prevention (which, as we mentioned at the very beginning of this report is the KEY to the success of any health promotion campaign) rests on the shoulders of the organization to create. And this step is comprehensive and all-encompassing, to say the least.

A lot of the work around primary prevention comes from sources overseas where there is more of a commitment to the worker and less of an emphasis on profits (at all costs). And this makes sense in more socialistic countries. For example, the following list comes to us from The Better Health Channel, a website of the Australian Government. And this website does a great job of summing up how a government-sponsored stress

prevention model might look if it was initiated at the highest levels. Companies wanting to mitigate stress at this level would:

- Ensure a safe working environment.
- Make sure that everyone is properly trained for their job.
- De-stigmatize work-related stress by openly recognizing it as a genuine problem.
- Discuss issues and grievances with employees, and take appropriate action when possible.
- Devise a stress management policy in consultation with the employees.
- Encourage an environment where employees have more say over their duties, promotional prospects, and safety.
- Organize to have a human resources manager.
- Cut down on the need for overtime by reorganizing duties or employing extra staff.
- Take into account the personal lives of employees and recognize that the demands of home will sometimes clash with the demands of work.
- Seek advice from health professionals, if necessary.

The U.S. organization wanting to follow ALL the occupational stress management changes suggested above would first have to buy into the notion that across-the-board changes are worth the cost. In addition to the above changes, these modifications would need to include better hiring practices (so that every employee is a good fit with the organization), changes in management (to weed out bad bosses), changes in communication (make it open and transparent with adequate warning of all future changes), total fairness in the granting of promotions and pay increases, changes in the working environment (including ergonomic, noise, safety, air quality, and lighting improvements), along with changes in certain company policies (including overtime policies, flex time, maternity leave, elder care, and extended leave policies in addition to granting workers more autonomy over what they do).

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

In many cases, a cultural shift would also be required throughout the entire organization, particularly if that organization was a company where overlapping deadlines, work overload, competitiveness, occasional unfair promotion practices, and conflicts between management and workers were in existence or especially where these practices were considered *the norm*. Occupational psychologists tell us that changing these “norms” and the “psychological contract” (i.e., the stress that goes with the territory) between the worker and management all facilitate the goal of bringing stress within manageable levels.

There’s just one problem with these guidelines. We’re not quite at the point in THIS country where we’re ready for them. It would be like trying to institute a no-smoking ban in bars in the mid 1960s!

So how do we create a model for stress management that works for us now? How can we give people tools that they can use AT WORK that don’t require major top-down changes in the corporate structure? How can we change the culture around how we manage our stress without having to totally overhaul the corporate culture that is already in place? And finally is there a way to intrinsically motivate employees to make these changes themselves, so they don’t have to be mandated from the top down?

Introducing The Stress Prevention Model

The Stress Prevention Model is a new 6-step model for managing stress at work. It’s a model that recognizes the realities of managing stress at work. It’s a grassroots model that can be built from the bottom up just as successfully as it can from the top down. It’s a PROACTIVE model that understands that on some days the average worker doesn’t even have time to catch his or her breath, let alone take time out to meditate, exercise, or practice yoga.

The Stress Prevention Model

1. **Assess** your stress.
2. **Avoid** unnecessary stress.
3. **Appraise** every stressful situation rationally.
4. **Accept** stress using mindfulness.
5. **Activate** your life to build *resilience*.
6. **Attune** to others by building your support network.

The stress prevention model promotes strategies that can be used at work allowing employees to manage their stress on the fly. It’s a model that is built on changing the structure of how individuals see stress and how they interact with it and not dependent on changing the structure of an entire organization (even though in certain cases organizational changes WOULD be more effective). It relies on simple time-tested psychological strategies like journaling, planning, time management, cognitive restructuring, mindfulness, and resilience training that have been around for decades and have been clinically proven to be effective.

But this model goes much deeper than just these six simple steps. In fact, it turns the occupational stress management model upside down by asking the simple question: *What if all stress management could become primary prevention?* What would that look like? How would that work? We will answer all of these questions in the remaining sections of this report. Section 2 offers a brief definition of stress and demonstrates how this definition plays out in the six step model, section 3 describes each of the six steps in detail. And section 4 will give you a short course in how to apply the model in a business environment.

Part II: The Definition Of Stress

When Dr. Hans Selye, an endocrinologist and considered the grandfather of the stress concept, first defined stress he was studying the physical effects of stress on rats like extremes of hot and cold. PHYSICAL stress is a bit easier to quantify and explain so his original definition of stress was simply “the response of the body to demands placed on it.” Defining stress got trickier though, when scientists realized—later in the 20th century—that most stress is PSYCHOLOGICAL stress. So it made sense that it was a psychologist, Richard Lazarus, who finally came up with a definition of stress a few decades later that a lot more people (but not everyone) could agree on:

“When the demands placed on you exceed your ability to meet those demands.”

This definition is often used when describing the “fit” between a person and his or her work environment. This definition implies a transaction between the person and their environment that almost always takes place in a stressful situation. So, it’s not just the demands placed on you that results in stress. It’s your ability to meet those demands. In fact, Selye, later on in his life liked to say: *“It’s not what happens to you that matters but how you take it.”*

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Lazarus's definition of stress is often also used to define job stress. For example, usually the best candidates for a new job or a new position are the ones who have a good person-environment fit or "P-E fit." In other words, where the applicant's capabilities match what he or she will be expected to do.

Here's how the Lazarus definition plays out in the six-step model:

Step 1 Assess. Assess the demands being placed on you. Figure out what they are. Measure them. You can't solve a problem until you know exactly what it is.

Step 2 Avoid. Avoid the demands that don't match your capabilities. Delegate the jobs you can't do or don't want to do because they cause you unnecessary stress. Plan ahead to avoid unnecessary demands. Practice time management to avoid the unnecessary demand of always feeling like you have too many demands and not enough time to deal with them.

Step 3 Appraise. Properly appraising the difficulty of the demand and properly appraising your capability of meeting that demand is a crucial step. Our minds play tricks on us by often exaggerating the difficulty of a demand or by minimizing our own capability of meeting that demand.

Step 4 Accept. Learning to occasionally accept the disparity between demands and capabilities as an opportunity for personal growth is the fourth step. This occasionally overrides step two. In other words, there are certain demands that are beyond your capabilities that you KNOWINGLY take on as an opportunity for personal growth. The key here is to take it on KNOWINGLY so you don't overstress about it. You become resilient to stress, to the degree that you are able to do this in every stressful situation you encounter.

Step 5 Activate. Improving your ability to handle demands by developing coping skills and strengthening the body is the fifth step. The stronger you become, the more of a burden (i.e., stress) you will be able to carry.

Step 6 Attune. Getting help with big demands (like loss of income, injury, illness, or the death of a loved one) through social support or building your support network *proactively* (by helping others) so that when big challenges (demands) come you are in a better position to handle them is the sixth step.

In the next section, we will take a detailed look at each of the six steps.

Part III: The Stress Prevention Model

Step 1. Assess

Knowing exactly where you are right now, in terms of the demands placed on you, your own levels of stress, and the stress in your organization is crucial when it comes to creating a stress management plan for the future. Assessing stress can be done by establishing strengths, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities in a person or an organization. Assessment really forces you to look at your stressors, break them down into their component parts, and by so doing, offering you penetrating insights.

Everyone complains about stress but few people take the time to really assess it. It's when you don't do this; when you DON'T take the time to assess your stress that you end up with only a vague notion of what is actually bothering you and no creative solutions for the very problems that are causing you to feel stressed in the first place!

For example, take the statement: *My job is stressful*. What does this statement tell you in terms of actionable information? (That you'd like to quit, find another job, ride it out or what?) The problem with this statement is that it doesn't really pinpoint WHAT about your job is stressful. It doesn't help you draw ANY conclusions about what to do about your stress. And it certainly doesn't lead to a solution to your stress.

For a lot of people (and for organizations too) this is about as far as their "assessment" of their stress ever goes.

Thus, most people and most organizations *feel their stress, but never solve it* because they never take the time to drill down and really evaluate it, measure it, and deconstruct it into its components. Lyle H. Miller, PhD, author of *The Stress Solution* agrees: "The first step is to find out what is causing the stress. You have to measure what goes on. Once

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

you measure it you can manage it, but you can't manage what you can't measure.”

Dr. Miller goes on to say in a white paper entitled *The Business Case for Corporate Stress Assessment and Intervention*: “Clearly defined problems are problems on their way to being solved—and measurement is the requisite ingredient in defining problems.”

But when we talk about assessment in STEP 1 we are talking about more than just handing out a stress test or conducting a stress survey. We are also talking about raising awareness about what stress is and what it does to the body, what the symptoms of stress are, how you can go about measuring those symptoms, and even how you can break through the mindset that prevents you from taking the time to manage your own stress. What you are ultimately measuring here is your and your company's receptivity or lack of receptivity and even the skill sets (i.e., signature strengths) already in place to help you take on the challenge of truly changing the culture in your organization around managing stress from the ground up.

So this step, ASSESSMENT also consists of five sub-steps. These are:

Monitoring stress symptoms

Understanding the consequences of stress

Measuring stress

Finding the time to manage stress

Identifying signature strengths already in place that can help manage stress

Remember, THE SIX STEP PREVENTION MODEL is a grassroots model designed to empower the individual to make changes and by so doing, change the culture of an organization from the ground up. So we will often be speaking to you about how YOU can initiate change in YOUR life and, by implication, in the lives of the people you teach and train. However, it's also important, if you can do it, to make changes at the organizational level. In other words: from the top down. That's why, in every step where it's applicable; you'll be given ideas for how to proceed both from a personal level and an organizational level.

Monitoring Stress Symptoms

Becoming aware of the symptoms of stress is where you begin this process. Once you have a clear understanding of what the symptoms of stress are, you will begin to connect the dots between your symptoms of stress and your sources of stress. Physical stress symptoms include a rapid heartbeat, perspiration, dry mouth, muscle tension, and cold hands. Emotional symptoms of stress include anger, anxiety, frustration, sadness, and depression. Behavioral symptoms of stress include always feeling hurried, talking fast, toe tapping, finger tapping, interrupting others, drinking, smoking, and emotional eating.

Sometimes stress symptoms can be confusing. If you find yourself perspiring after climbing three flights of stairs, or experiencing dry mouth walking across a parking lot on a hot day, or cold hands on a winter's day, those “symptoms” are probably NOT the result of psychological stress. But when you find yourself experiencing any of these symptoms before a weekly sales meeting or whenever a particular person walks into the room or when you have to perform a particular task you don't like to do, that's when KNOWING your SYMPTOMS can help you connect the dots to your sources of stress.

Sometimes our stress symptoms are so subtle we don't even detect them. But that doesn't mean they're not there! In a revealing experiment conducted by author and brain scientist, Dr. Antonio Damasio, subjects were asked to pick cards from two different decks. One of the decks had more losing cards than the other. The subjects, who were hooked to a biofeedback device, starting registering a stress response when choosing cards from the losing deck BEFORE they consciously knew which one of the decks was stacked against them.

On the other hand, some people just don't notice their stress symptoms no matter how obvious they are. If you happen to fall into this category, everyone around you from family members to co-workers may know you're stressed except you. That's why biofeedback devices are an important aid in helping us to monitor our stress whether the signs of stress are obvious or subtle.

Devices that help you monitor stress symptoms

Biodots are a rudimentary biofeedback device that provides information about a biological process going on inside your body. If you've ever noticed how cold

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

your hands are when you are nervous, this is exactly the kind of information that biodots measure.

The biodot changes color as the surface of the skin changes in temperature. Blue means you're relaxed. Black means you're stressed. They may be basic, but they are inexpensive, so you can hand them out at seminars to everyone attending. Price: 100 biodots \$10. (Available from StressStop.com)

An Electronic Stress Thermometer does the same thing as a biodot, but it measures the temperature on the surface of the skin—in actual numbers—rather than by changing colors (like the biodot) and it covers a much broader range of temperature. These devices sell for about \$20 each. (Available from StressStop.com)

GPS For The Soul is an app you can download from iTunes for your iPhone. This FREE app allows you to measure your stress by holding your finger over the camera lens on the phone. To quote the HeartMath Institute who helped co-create the product: “GPS for the Soul can connect you with the things that help you return to that centered place, using music, poetry, breathing exercises and pictures of your loved ones.” (Available FREE on iTunes.)

EmWave is a device that measures heart rate variability (HRV). HRV is the hot new form of biofeedback and HeartMath has pretty much cornered the market on this modality with the EmWave. Now in its second edition, this hand-held device (with a wire that clips to your ear) helps you change your breathing patterns to bring about a calm state of mind and body that HeartMath refers to as “coherence.” Price \$179. (Available from Heartmathstore.com)

Biofeedback devices have revolutionized the study of stress. These devices monitor the changes that take place INSIDE your body when you are stressed and let you see these changes in ways you can understand like a visual graphic, an audible tone, or some other signal. Having this feedback, in whatever form it takes, gives you the proof you need that what you are doing in order to relax is actually working (whether that is meditation, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or something else.)

Organizations can have stress symptoms too. At the organizational level, stress often presents itself in the form of tardiness, absenteeism, presenteeism, low morale, accidents, and high rates of employee turnover. Here again, we need to be able to connect the symptoms of stress with the sources of stress. That's why surveys and questionnaires which we talk about later in this section come in handy. These instruments give us FEEDBACK about what is going on inside the organization.

Understanding The Consequences Of Stress

Getting people to manage stress hinges in part on teaching them WHY they need to manage stress. Organizations and individuals need to learn exactly what the consequences are for ignoring their stress and what the benefits are for managing it. The work of Dr. James Prochaska at the University of Rhode Island confirms the importance of this step. Prochaska's work tells us the more reasons we have for WHY we should make a behavioral change, the more likely we are to stick with the program and move through all five stages of change and get to the sixth “termination stage,” where we are no longer tempted to go back to our old behavior.

As wellness professionals, this means we have to be loud and clear about consequences of stress and the health benefits of managing stress. As far as the consequences go, heart disease is the biggest concern. Stress is a recognized behavioral risk factor for heart disease and heart disease is the biggest killer in the U.S. by far. The list of other health problems that can be adversely affected by stress is impressive too. These stress-related health problems include hypertension, gastro-intestinal disorders, allergies, asthma, MS, lupus, thyroid problems, infertility, headaches, muscle tension, and chronic pain. It's a long list and you will certainly get people's attention when you publish this list in newsletters and on websites.

Stress has consequences for the organization too. Some of those symptoms we mentioned earlier, like absenteeism, accidents, low morale, and high rates of turnover are going to affect the bottom line of the organization. As we said in Part 1, the American Institute of Stress estimates that these very symptoms of stress, and the reduction in productivity they lead to, cost American Industry upwards of 300 billion dollars a year.

In the book, *Preventive Stress Management In Organizations*, the authors make the interesting point that individual and organizational stress cut both ways. Stressed out workers can literally stress an otherwise healthy organization. And a stressed out organization can stress otherwise healthy workers.

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

To illustrate these two points, imagine a company where because of cutbacks (i.e., organizational stress caused by financial difficulties), the limited sales staff and customer service representatives remaining must work long hours without proper breaks and are disgruntled as a result. Interactions with customers under these circumstances are not going to be ideal. Customer satisfaction is likely to go down, customer complaints are likely to rise, and upper level management may not even realize that its own stress symptoms have affected the lives of its workers and in turn affected its bottom line.

Now imagine these same customer reps are experiencing stress outside the doors of the company, (i.e., individual stress) perhaps as the result of living in a high-crime neighborhood or maybe as the result of a recent natural disaster, like a hurricane or an earthquake or just for various personal reasons. Either way, you get the same end result: stressed out workers, reduced productivity, lower sales, and increased customer complaints. No matter what the source of its stress, the company that doesn't know its stressors or the stressors facing its employees is going to suffer the consequences.

Here are some resources that can help you raise awareness about the CONSEQUENCES of stress:

Stress... At Work. (Download from cdc.gov/niosh/). The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has published this booklet on managing stress at work. It provides a short course in what job stress is and how to handle it. Price: FREE.

Preventing Stress Related Disease. (StressStop.com) A simple trifold brochure that teaches people how to recognize stress symptoms and more importantly how ignoring these symptoms can lead to certain health consequences. Prices range depending on quantity ordered from 25¢–45¢

Stop Stress This Minute. (welcoa.org) This book makes the case for why people need to manage stress and teaches them exactly how to do that in unique ways from changing their thinking patterns to taking a problem-solving approach to learning how to prioritize time. Prices range depending on quantity ordered \$3–\$10.

Understanding why you need to manage stress is an important step in the process of behavioral change which will reverberate

long after you take this step. It's like winding up a clock or a toy. The energy you expend on this step will pay dividends later, in that it will keep people moving and motivated through the remaining steps. Take your time with this step. Don't short-change it, as it is a key to launching your whole program.

Measuring Stress

Stress is in some ways a vague term describing a whole panoply of different thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. When we break our concept of "stress" down into specific categories like disorganization, time pressure, financial stress, lack of control and relationship problems we move one step closer to getting to the root of our stress and begin to get a handle on how to solve it. Measuring stress (or handing out a stress assessment) is how we start this process of identifying the specific areas of stress that need addressing.

Choosing a good stress assessment involves selecting between a variety of different attributes. According to the authors of *Preventive Stress Management In Organizations* these attributes include validity, reliability, feasibility, and utility.

Validity: Validation tells you that the stress test has passed certain rigorous standards. Usually this involves a "psychometric" comparison between two stress tests. Since not everyone agrees on what stress is, validity is sometimes difficult to prove.

Reliability: A reliable stress test is one that provides similar results every time and doesn't make the mistake of detecting stress where none exists, or the opposite, of NOT detecting stress where it actually exists. For obvious reasons, reliability is just as important if not more important than validity.

Feasibility: How difficult is the test to administer? How difficult is it to take? How long a test is it? A 10 question stress test might be easy to administer and cost nothing, but it might not yield much in the way of useful information, either. On the other hand, a 300 question test that takes an hour to complete and costs \$20 per person might yield a ton of data, but that might not be a feasible test to conduct across the entire organization. Affordability of the assessment is obviously a factor here.

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Utility: How useful and cogent is the data being collected, both for the person taking the test and the organization giving it? Tests can be self-administered or scored by an outside agency. Electronic tests can give the organization aggregate data about how the organization is doing as a whole and paper tests can give the individual feedback on how he or she is doing in terms of their levels of stress. Some self-administered tests don't really help the user draw any conclusions about what to do about their stress. Other stress tests are sent back to the vendor for scoring and analysis and this process takes time (and sometimes causes concern about privacy) and usually raises the price of the assessment considerably.

One more determination that needs to be made is whether you want a paper test or whether you want to deliver the test electronically OR have the ability to do both.

Here are three stress assessments that are popular in the corporate market place.

The Holmes-Rahe Social Readjustment Rating Scale. One of the first stress tests ever devised, this test was originally validated using a cohort of 2,500 U.S. Navy sailors. Dr. Thomas Holmes and Dr. Richard Rahe developed this inventory in the 1970s to determine how much change a person was going through. Change is considered stressful and the test makes a reliable prediction, based on your score, of whether you are going to get sick in the next 12 months. Price: FREE (You can download it off Wikipedia and can find it in many other places on the Internet.)

The Stress Profiler allows people to self-assess their levels of stress in ten different areas of their life including time pressure, financial stress, and stress outlets. There are 10 questions in each of the 10 sections. It is available in both paper and electronic formats. It's been tested for reliability, takes about 15 minutes to complete, and helps the user draw conclusions about the data collected, with short articles about how to manage stress in each of the 10 areas. Prices range \$1.50–\$8 depending on quantity ordered. (Available from StressStop.com.)

The Stress Map is a comprehensive, self-administered stress test. It contains 300 questions

and explores 21 different areas. It allows the user to graph the results of the test and see how he or she is doing in terms of stress strengths and weaknesses. The instrument has been tested for both validity and reliability. It requires about 30+ minutes to complete. There is an electronic version as well. Price ranges for the paper version from \$9.95 to \$15.95 depending on quantity ordered. (Available from Essi Systems.)

Before we leave the subject of measuring stress, another important way to do this at an organizational level is by tracking certain data that we referred to earlier in the section on stress symptoms through the use of questionnaires and surveys. The following list comes from the American Psychological Association website. Tracking this data can reveal issues and trends that are often associated with worker stress.

- Tardiness rate
- Absenteeism rate
- Grievances filed
- Clinic and Employee Assistance Program utilization rates
- Rate and severity of work-related accidents
- Interdepartmental employee transfer rate
- Employee turnover rate
- Performance of specific cost/profit centers in standard terms (time per unit of service, unit produced per time period, percent utilization of raw materials, etc.)
- Sales volume and revenue, change in volume and revenue

In addition to tracking the above data, you may also find it helpful to distribute questionnaires and surveys. These instruments help you get a handle on exactly how stress in the workplace is perceived and experienced throughout your organization. Conducting these surveys often reveals problems in the organization that can easily be fixed or addressed. Other times the problems are more intractable and you have to be careful even conducting such a survey as it can ruffle feathers in management and raise the expectation in the workforce that something is going to be done about these concerns.

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The results from these questionnaires however, along with data about ROI, can often be used to make a case to top level management for rolling out a comprehensive stress management program. Many surveys are available for free on the Internet. There is an excellent but fairly involved questionnaire available on the NIOSH website entitled *The Quality of Worklife Questionnaire*.

There is a much simpler job stress questionnaire available from the American Institute of Stress website. It consists of only 10 questions, but it is self-scoring and gives a worker an indication of his or her levels of job stress.

Finding The Time To Manage Stress

Time pressure is a major source of stress. Thus, asking people to add one more thing to their already busy schedules—like taking time to exercise—can in effect, be adding to their stress. One of the central issues around teaching stress management is getting people over this hurdle and the mindset that says: *I don't have time to manage stress.*

We address this problem in the Stress Prevention Model in three ways:

1. By pointing out that managing stress SAVES time in the long run.
2. Emphasizing unique stress-reducing strategies like cognitive restructuring and mindfulness that can be utilized while your stress is happening.
3. Encouraging people to borrow time from non-urgent, non-important activities in their schedule thus “freeing up” time to manage stress.

We will address the first point here, and save the second and third points for later in this report.

Most people just don't realize that time spent managing stress ultimately leads to time-savings over all. If we look at stress strictly from the standpoint of time lost to stress-related illness we're looking at a staggering number. The American Institute of Stress estimates that 70-90% of all doctors visits are for stress-related concerns. This statistic alone hints at how large this number might be. A Gallup poll of over 200 U.S. corporations revealed that 60% of all managers felt that stress-

related illness was pervasive among their workers and decreased productivity at an estimated cost of 16 days of sick leave and \$8000 per employee!

If we then look at how managing stress increases our productivity, it's easy to make a case for how it saves time in the long run. Dr. John Ratey author of the book *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science Of Exercise And The Brain* devotes an entire chapter to the connection between regular exercise and reduced levels of stress. But what he spends even more time talking about is how regular exercise makes us more effective, more efficient, more productive and even better learners. In chapter one, he writes about students but then applies this logic to adults as well:

“When students...go for a mile run in gym, they are more prepared in their other classes; their senses are heightened; their focus and mood are improved; they're less fidgety and tense; and they feel more motivated and invigorated. *The same goes for adults in the classroom of life.*”

Ratey goes on to say: “studies show that exercise reduces stress and makes for more productive employees.” In one particular study, participants worked out during lunchtime. “At the end of the day these people filled out questionnaires about how well they interacted with colleagues, managed their time, and met deadlines. Some 65% fared better in all three categories on the days they exercised.”

Exercising is a proven way to manage stress. And as the research shows, taking time out to manage stress whether that involves exercising, practicing yoga, or meditating, SAVES time in the long run. These stress management activities allow you to focus better, communicate better, and perform at your peak.

A great way to get this point across when presenting programs on stress is to ask if there are any people in your audience who exercise, meditate or practice yoga on a regular basis. You will almost always get a sampling of people who will raise their hands. Ask these people to talk about their experiences and you will get support for all of the benefits described above. This is the BEST possible proof of the very information that you are trying to convey and it will come from the best possible source: The peers of the very people sitting in the room.

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Identifying Signature Strengths That I Already Have In Place That Can Help Me Manage My Stress

When it comes to stress we all have certain behavioral traits like excessive worrying, having a short fuse, or being irresponsible with money that make managing our stress even harder. And this is some of the information we tend to focus on in the assessment phase. THE GOOD NEWS IS: we also have certain strengths that can come to our aid in stressful situations and it helps to be aware of exactly what these strengths are. Martin Seligman, considered by many to be the founder of positive psychology, calls these *signature strengths*.

Examples of signature strengths include sense of humor, forgiveness, emotional intelligence, curiosity, good judgment, and perseverance. According to an online article in *Psychology Today*, knowing your signature strengths can really make a difference in how well you cope with stress. The author starts the article by asking a question:

“Do you wake up in the morning excited to start your day—or do you feel dread, avoidance, and/or apathy? We tend to think of these reactions as fixed personality styles, but that’s wrong. The emotions you experience as you get out of bed are often a function of whether you spend your days using your signature strengths—or trying frantically to correct your weaknesses.”

At his Authentic Happiness website Martin Seligman explains the rationale behind working to your strengths: “Knowing your strengths—and weaknesses—may give you insight into why some parts of your job are enjoyable while others fill you with dread. If you have the luxury of adjusting the scope of your job then of course you should focus on the tasks that draw on your strengths while delegating away the parts that don’t—even if you are perfectly competent at them.”

You can download the Signature Strengths Self-Rating Scale, free at HappinessHypothesis.com or you can go to Martin Seligman’s Authentic Happiness web portal at the University of Pennsylvania website, and take a much more in-depth measure of your signature strengths. There are 24 signature strengths in all. The complete list includes:

Curiosity	Fairness
Love of Learning	Leadership
Judgment	Self-control
Ingenuity	Prudence
Emotional Intelligence	Humility
Perspective	Appreciation
Valor	Gratitude
Perseverance	Hope
Integrity	Spirituality
Kindness	Forgiveness
Loving	Humor
Citizenship	Zest

When we measure our stress we tend to focus on our weaknesses. But as Seligman’s research shows, we also need to focus on (and measure) our signature strengths: the positive traits that will help us handle stress better. These are the qualities that promote resilience, strength, flexibility and balance. Knowing your signature strengths and working to them will jump start your ascent up the six step ladder of the STRESS PREVENTION MODEL.

While the term signature strengths has not been used at an organizational level, the term “job resources” has and is the organizational equivalent of signature strengths. Job resources can have a buffering effect on a worker’s level of stress. Benefits like health insurance, on-site day care, employee assistance programs, and other forms of health counseling and even procedures for lodging complaints and grievances through HR constitute a short list of the kind of job resources that help people manage better under stress than they would at organizations without these benefits.

Step 1 Review

Monitoring stress symptoms helps you connect the dots between your symptoms of stress and your sources of stress. Biofeedback devices can help you accomplish that goal.

Understanding the consequences of stress keeps you motivated to make changes and stick with the program. Brochures and workbooks can help you do that too.

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Measuring stress involves breaking it down into its component parts, which ultimately leads to a solution. Stress assessments put your stress in perspective and give you a baseline to measure your improvement.

Finding the time to manage stress is about realizing that taking the time to exercise, practice yoga, and meditate SAVES time in the long run. Your own audience members when asked can help you spread the word.

What signature strengths do I already have to help me manage my stress? In assessment we tend to focus more on weaknesses. But we need to also consider what strengths we have to call on in order to meet the challenge of handling stress. The Authentic Happiness website can help you do that.

Step 2. Avoid

Avoid unnecessary stress. You wouldn't dream of getting on a local highway that was always jammed at rush hour if you knew a better way of getting across town. Like avoiding the traffic during rush hour, a lot of the stress in our lives is avoidable, too. "Taking a deep breath or counting to 10 when you are stressed is all well and good," explains Dr. Robert Epstein, former editor-in-chief of *Psychology Today*. "But you will be much happier in the long run if you can find ways to avoid the situations that make you feel stressed in the first place."

If a certain task you do at work or particular client makes you tense, you may be able to trade that task or client off with a fellow worker who doesn't mind it or them as much. If a certain co-worker makes you tense, there may be ways you can limit the amount of time you spend with this person. If you always say yes to everything people ask of you, or you don't stand up for yourself, learning how to be more assertive and politely say "no" is yet another way you can avoid unnecessary stress.

Here is a list of what people often find stressful at work:

Time pressure	Too many meetings
Long commute	Having two bosses
Forced overtime	Operating in crisis mode
Interruptions	Giving a formal presentation
Not working to a plan	Lack of confidence in management
A difficult boss	

As you read the suggestions below for how to AVOID STRESS, consider the problems just listed, particularly the ones that apply to your work setting and see if you can apply any of the following advice to a particular situation in your organization. Here are the five sub-steps to helping you avoid unnecessary stress:

- Journaling
- Planning
- Organization
- Managing time
- Delegating

Journaling: Keeping a daily log of your stress

Keeping track of your stress for at least a week, preferably two, can make a major difference in how you handle stress. WebMD agrees: "Try using a stress journal to record stressful events, your response to them, and how you coped. After you know what is causing your stress, try making some changes in your life that will help you avoid stressful situations."

"If you ask people to write for 15 minutes a day for three or four days," explains University of Texas at Austin psychologist and researcher James Pennebaker, "their physical health actually gets better. There are changes in their immune function, they get along with people better and it helps them put things together better in their own minds." Research on journaling has even been linked to decreases in symptoms of asthma and rheumatoid arthritis.

According to the University of Rochester Medical Center website: Journaling helps control your symptoms and improve your mood by:

- Helping you prioritize problems, fears, and concerns
- Tracking any symptoms day-to-day so that you can recognize triggers and learn ways to better control them
- Providing an opportunity for positive self-talk and identifying negative thoughts and behaviors

The University of Rochester Medical Center concludes this section on journaling by advising that: "keeping a journal can

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

help you identify what's causing that stress or anxiety. Then, once you've identified your stressors, you can work on a plan to resolve the problems and, in turn, reduce stress.”

Simply writing down what happens to you, when it happens to you and why it bothers you will help you avoid unnecessary stress. Why? Because you see how certain stressors recur over and over again and you see the importance of resolving them. For example, you see the importance of allowing extra time for things to go wrong because you see how you consistently underestimate how long it takes to do something. You may see that a lot of your stress has to do with the morning commute, and that it would really be worth it for you to try telecommuting or moving closer to work. You may see a lot of stress arises in the morning, getting ready for work and that getting up a half hour earlier would eliminate a lot of this stress.

These observations may sound basic, but this is the kind of thing we seldom do on an individual or an organizational basis. We tend to ignore the signs of stress, or just work around them until we see certain issues popping up again and again—on black and white—on the pages of a journal.

Journaling at work can be done at the organizational level by taking surveys, putting out suggestion boxes, and tracking signs and symptoms of stress like absenteeism, accidents, and employee complaints. All change begins with awareness of what it is you wish to change. Just like journaling at a personal level, this deliberate tracking of stress in an organization may set the wheels in motion to eventually solve these problems. If, as a trainer, you want to teach this concept at work, see *The Stress Management Journal* described at the end of this section.

Planning Your Day

Planning out your day and making to-do lists is another way to increase productivity, keep yourself on track, and ultimately reduce stress. When you take just five to 10 minutes at the beginning of each day to plan or write out a list of things to do, you literally will relax a bit, knowing you don't have to keep that information swirling around in the back of your head.

Dr. Robert Epstein, the former editor-in-chief of *Psychology Today* has studied how planning helps you lower stress. Epstein polled over 2,500 people at his website and asked them questions about the most effective techniques for managing stress. He found the

technique that worked best for this group of respondents was planning: In other words, “fighting stress before it even starts, planning things rather than letting them happen,” says Epstein. “That means planning your day, your year and your life so that stress is minimized.”

While studying psychology at Harvard, one of Epstein's professors was the world famous behaviorist, B.F. Skinner. “Skinner was amazing at managing stress. He was quite a planner. Not only did he plan his day every day, but he had a 10-year planner,” says Epstein.

Planners usually spend a few minutes at the start of every day creating a to-do list. Sometimes it helps to keep a short list of say six to 10 things. Crossing things off this list will give you a sense of accomplishment, so don't forget to pencil through each item on the list as you complete each task. When you find yourself getting off task, as most people do at some point during their day, check the list again and you will get back on track.

“Planning is effective for handling stress... it minimizes or eliminates the surprises, the unknowns. When you can do that, you have less to worry about regarding what's going to happen down the road.”

– From *STRESS AND CHALLENGE AT THE TOP* by James Campbell Quick and Deborah Nelson.

Planning at work. At an organizational level, *lack of planning* can be very stressful. This often accounts for why employees lose confidence in management. Careful planning as well as improving lines of communication between management and workers can help organizations AVOID this kind of stress. Planning at this level can be done through weekly staff meetings and by creating mission statements and setting goals. Knowing exactly what the goals of an organization are, and having measurable steps for achieving these goals requires careful planning, and careful execution of the plan.

Organization

Intuitively, we all know that organization matters. When you clean your desk drawers, organize your files, clear out the clutter from storage spaces, empty out your inbox, and work

from a clean desk or work station, you actually can feel your mood shift. This is not an imagined shift, but a very real one, involving the release of feel-good chemicals like dopamine. “Dopamine,” according to an article in *Psychology Today* “holds a prized position in the annals of popular science as the ‘reward drug.’” It is released in the brain when something deeply satisfying occurs or something wonderful catches us by surprise. (Exactly like walking into your recently cleaned up workspace!)

Clutter and *disorganization* does the opposite. “If your office is cluttered or disorganized, you may waste valuable time searching for papers and phone numbers, or you could miss important deadlines,” organizational expert Burton Ways explains in *Forbes Magazine* online. “That clutter is likely also slowing down your mental energy and making it more difficult to function.”

Disorganization literally costs workers lost time, (spent looking for things) money, (for late fees for bills not paid on time) and stress (the embarrassment you suffer when friends drop by your messy house or office). Another organizational expert Susan Kousek quoted in *Forbes* explains: “Our productivity is impacted by our level of organization. Disorganization bothers most people and causes stress. The clutter and disorganization drags many workers down.”

Here again, the work of Dr. Robert Epstein confirms what we suspect. In an article in *Scientific American Mind* he explains “organizing your space” falls into the category that he calls “source management” which he concludes is the “second most powerful predictor” of the people who will be the most happy and the most successful at work.

Organization at work can easily be practiced at a corporate level because company resources and people and time can be allocated to accomplish these objectives. Usually you can tell a business that isn’t doing well by the amount of mess and clutter you find when you walk in the front door. In Asian cultures, organizing or feng shui, is taken to the level of an art form. You can see this in almost any Asian-operated retail shop. Organization saves people time looking for things, tracking inventory, and staying on top of deadlines, so this sub-step has the side effect of helping employees and managers AVOID time pressure, too.

The Stress Prevention Model

1. Assess your stress.
2. Avoid unnecessary stress.
3. Appraise every stressful situation rationally.
4. Accept stress using mindfulness.
5. Activate your life to build resilience.
6. Attune to others by building your support network.



STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Managing Time

Learning how to manage time is a key resource for learning how to manage stress. Terms like “time famine” and “hurry sickness” and “perceived control of time” have entered into the psychological lexicon and remind us of the link between time management and stress management. According to a research study published in the *Journal of Psychology* “perceived control of time is a predictor of job satisfaction, performance and various indicators of well-being.”

The study goes on to say that: “time management behavior incorporates the clarification of goals; the reduction of goal conflicts, the development of appropriate strategies which transform goals into action and an effective monitoring of goal progress which ends with ‘a sense of mastery over how one allocates one’s time.’”

Managing time helps us avoid unnecessary stress in many ways. Learning how to get more things done in less time, gaining control over procrastination, and learning how to stay focused helps us reduce time pressure and consequently stress. Dr. Stephen Covey who wrote the best-selling book *The Seven Habits Of Highly Effective People* believes that time management is all about how you prioritize your time. “Most of us spend too much time on what is urgent and not enough time on what is important.” Covey’s approach really brings together time management and stress management.

In his book, *First Things First*, Covey illustrates this point with a graphic similar to the one you see below. This chart divides all the tasks we do into four quadrants that are categorized by varying degrees of urgency and importance. As you can see when you look at this table, spending time in certain quadrants increases our stress while spending time in others lowers it.

Time Management Matrix



The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the author's and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Wellness Council of America (WELCOA).

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

What Covey encourages us to do—which almost guarantees that time management will manifest in stress management is to steal time from quadrant 4 and set aside that time for quadrant 2. Quadrant 4 activities are time-wasters. Quadrant 2 activities like planning and organizing and goal setting are all ultimately time-savers. They all lead to more “perceived control of time” and consequently less stress.

As the study in the *Journal of Psychology* concluded: “Because time-related problems are a serious demand on many employees, time management training, which induces better planning behavior...seems to foster perceived control of time and decrease perceived stress. Even a short intervention of one day can have positive effects on well-being.”

Managing time at work can easily be taught in seminars at the organizational level and by using certain tools mentioned below.

Delegating

Delegation ought to be a simple way to manage stress. Delegate a stressful job to another person, and you AVOID experiencing the stress of doing that particular job yourself. Delegate ANY job to another person and you lighten your own load, thus reducing YOUR levels of stress. However, many people find it hard to delegate work, even when they are in a position to do so.

According to a 2007 study on time management quoted in *The Harvard Business Review*, “close to half of the 332 companies surveyed were concerned about their employees’ delegation skills. At the same time, only 28% of those companies offered any training on the topic. ‘Most people will tell you they are too busy to delegate—that it’s more efficient for them to just do it themselves,’ says Carol Walker, the president of Prepared to Lead, a consulting firm that focuses on developing young leaders.”

Stress experts agree though that delegation IS a key aspect to side-stepping stress. In the book *Stress And Challenge At The Top*, authors James Campbell Quick and Debra Nelson write: “Delegation of authority and responsibility is a key to an executive’s success.” Jane Russell, author of the book, *Deal With Stress, How To Improve The Way You Work* writes: “mastering the skill of delegation will help you manage your time and therefore reduce your stress levels.” Jeffery Ferriss, author of *The 4-Hour Workweek* writes: “empower others to act without interrupting you.”

The trick to delegating is to open your mind to it, and allow it. That’s why we said it “OUGHT to be a simple way to manage stress,” at the opening of this section. It seems like so few people are able to do it. Even supervisors often believe they can do the job better themselves, and as a result, have trouble delegating. Keith Johnson author of *Earn Twice As Much With Half The Stress* provides a five step plan for HOW to delegate properly:

Delegate work to someone who will get it done.

Communicate the precise conditions of what it means to complete the job satisfactorily.

Work out a step-by-step plan for how the job is to get done and what resources will be needed to complete the job.

Create a structure for accountability such as milestones and deadlines where the work can be reviewed and checked in a timely manner.

Get buy-in from the person doing the job by simply asking him or her to suggest their own deadline.

Sometimes the work we do ourselves is done purely out of habit. Going to the bank, the grocery store, and the post office are all examples of work that doesn’t have to be done anymore. Much of this work can be done online and delivered to your doorstep but we continue to do these tasks simply because that’s the way we’ve always done it. *And some C-priority tasks don’t have to be done at all.* One self-help author describes this process, which would include, for example, tossing junk mail BEFORE you read it, as delegating work to the trash can.

Delegating at work, like managing time, is a skill that NEEDS to be learned. Skill-building in this area is worth taking to every level within an organization because when it is NOT done properly it can lead to numerous organizational problems and elevated levels of stress. There’s an old expression: “People don’t leave a job they leave a manager.” And when a manager knows how to delegate properly, a lot of these problems can be avoided.

Step 2 Review

Journaling. Keep track of your stress for at least a week, preferably two to find recurring sources of stress that you can eliminate or alter in order to reduce your stress. **Journaling at**

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

the organizational level includes taking surveys, putting out suggestion boxes, and tracking signs and symptoms of stress like absenteeism, accidents, and employee complaints.

Planning your day. Spend a few minutes every day, planning your day. Make a list of 5-10 things you must do each day, and don't forget to cross off items on the list as you complete each one. **Planning at the organizational level** can be done through weekly staff meetings and by creating mission statements and setting goals.

Organization. Getting rid of clutter, cleaning out closets and storage spaces, and working from a clean desk will save you time, save you money and lift your spirits. **Organization** can easily be orchestrated in any company because company resources and people and time can be allocated to accomplishing these objectives.

Managing time. Remember the time management matrix? Spend less and less time in quadrant four where the things you do are just time wasters and devote that time to important quadrant two activities like educating yourself, practicing stress management, building your most important relationships, exercising and planning which will ultimately save you time in the long run. **Managing time at work** can easily be taught in seminars at the organizational level and by using certain tools mentioned below.

Delegating. We all put up roadblocks to delegating like believing that no one can do the job better than we can, or that we can't afford to delegate, or that we just want to do things the way we've always done them *even if it's more time consuming!* You must shed these limiting beliefs first in order to begin delegating. **Delegating at work**, like managing time, is a skill that NEEDS to be learned. Skill-building in this area is worth taking to every level within an organization because when it is NOT done properly it can lead to numerous organizational problems and elevated levels of stress.

The above techniques can be easily taught to the people in your organization with the help of the following products.

FREE Handout: *Delegation Worksheet.* This worksheet and the article that accompanies it entitled "Successful Delegation," is published on the MIND TOOLS website and tells you everything you need to know about why you don't delegate and why you should. The worksheet will help you analyze tasks into those you can delegate and those you can't. Price: FREE (available from Mindtools.com)

Workbook: *The Stress Management Journal* gives you ample space for tracking your daily stressors while it guides you through a 28 day course for reducing stress. More than just a journaling tool, this 32-page workbook teaches you how to make time for yourself, recognize underlying causes of stress, and fix your faulty thinking. Prices range depending on quantity ordered \$1.50–\$10 each. (Available from StressStop.com)

Training Video: *Managing Stress At Work.* This 15-minute training video focuses on five steps for learning how to manage stress including step 2, *eliminate or avoid stress whenever possible.* Other steps follow the stress prevention model as well: 1. Identify the source of your stress, which is the same as ASSESS. 2. Eliminate or avoid stress whenever possible, which is the same as AVOID. 3. Rethink the stress you can't eliminate, which is the same as APPRAISE. 4. Cope with the stress you can't rethink, which is the same as ACTIVATE. 5. When all else fails, seek support, which is the same as ATTUNE. This video demonstrates how these simple yet practical strategies work in a variety of real-life and work situations. Price: \$195. (Available from StressStop.com)

Online Webinar: *Time Management Fundamentals.* Covey's unique approach combines prioritizing tasks, eliminating time wasters, and understanding the difference between the urgent and the important. By incorporating all these qualities in one approach the Franklin Covey system is just about the only time management system that actively embraces a stress management outcome. This webinar comes with its own downloadable toolkit for use during and after the workshop. Price: 2-hour webinar \$149. (Available from Franklin Covey)

Book: *Getting Organized At Work* shows busy professionals how to get two more hours of productivity out of each day. It provides 24 lessons to master working on the right task at the right time and to put an end to procrastination. Price: \$7.95 (Available on Amazon.com)

Mobile Device App: *Schedule Planner.* Created by Intersog, Schedule Planner helps you plan out daily activity and tracks what tasks you've actually done. Categorize tasks under such headings as "Health" and "Shopping" to "Work" and many others. You can also input daily schedules, appointments, and events in advance and review them whenever you want via Schedule Planner's twin-mode graphic calendar. Tasks are color-coded by category to enable you to see how your day is going to pan out at a glance. Price: FREE (Available on iTunes and on Google Play)

Step 3. Appraise

Step 3 Appraise is about changing the way you think. The vast majority of the stress we experience in life is psychological stress. This means that most of our stress starts in our own minds. It doesn't mean our stress isn't real, it simply means that often times an appraisal, or sizing up of the situation comes between the stimulus—what happens to you and your response. One of the most confounding (but ultimately liberating) things about stress is that, to a large degree, the amount of stress we experience at any given moment is almost entirely the result of our appraisal of the situation.

It's confounding because an overly negative interpretation of a situation (like: *I've got the world's worst boss*) can lead to a lot of stress. It's liberating because we can potentially eliminate a LOT of stress just by changing our interpretation of stressful events.

Dr. George Everly and Dr. Jeffery M. Lating explain this concept in their book *A Clinical Guide To The Treatment Of The Human Stress Response*. "Like beauty, a stressor resides in the eye of the beholder." They continue by writing that a person's "interpretation of the environment leads to the formation of [stress] from an otherwise NEUTRAL stimulus." To put it another way, what YOU find stressful, say for example, slow moving traffic, long meetings or a particular co-worker, another person with an entirely different method of appraising the situation might find mildly stressful or NOT stressful at all.

Throughout history great writers and philosophers have said the same thing. In fact, Albert Ellis, one of the founders of cognitive therapy, included quotes from some of these great thinkers in his writing. He quotes Shakespeare who wrote: "There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." And the Greek philosopher Epictetus who wrote: "Men are not disturbed by things but by the views which they take of them." Even Hans Selye as we pointed out earlier, liked to say: "*It's not what happens to you that matters but how you take it.*"

Not only do we appraise the severity of every event we encounter, we also appraise our own ability to handle it. This appraisal forms the basis for the definition of stress we talked about in Part 2 which was drawn from the work of Dr. Richard Lazarus. This is often referred to as a transactional definition of stress because it acknowledges how we go back and forth between appraising what's happening in our environment to appraising how well we BELIEVE we can cope with it. It's this transaction between

the two positions that determines how stressful we THINK an event is going to be.

Consciously altering one's appraisal of a situation in order to make it less stressful is often referred to as cognitive restructuring. The word cognitive here simply refers to thinking. The word restructuring refers to our ability to change our thinking. In their research paper, *Effects Of Occupational Stress Management Intervention Programs, A Meta Analysis*, authors Dr. Katherine M. Richardson and Hannah Rothstein point out that "cognitive-behavioral interventions" (i.e., cognitive restructuring approaches) are the most effective methods of reducing stress in organizations across the board. "Cognitive-behavioral interventions consistently produced larger effects than other types of interventions."

Cognitive-behavioral interventions or cognitive restructuring is most often taught by giving people specific techniques that promote greater fluidity of thinking during a stressful event. It's when our thinking becomes rigid and fixed that we tend to react to stress badly. But these cognitive techniques (or methods of accurately APPRAISING each and every situation we encounter) teach people how to change their thinking on the fly and often prevents stress from happening in the first place, or at least nipping it in the bud before it has a chance to inflict any pain or suffering. While there are numerous cognitive techniques to choose from, here are five that seem to be the most effective:

Become aware of your negative self-talk

Seeing the big picture

Not blaming others

Learning to expect stress

Accurately appraising the situation plus your ability to handle it

Become Aware Of Your Negative Self-Talk

Most people are barely aware of their overly negative self-talk. Becoming aware of it and changing it can really help reduce stress. But exactly what is self-talk and why is it so often negative? According to the Mayo Clinic website, "Self-talk is the endless stream of unspoken thoughts that run through your head every day. These automatic thoughts can be positive or

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

negative. Some of your self-talk comes from logic and reason. Other self-talk may arise from misconceptions that you create because of lack of information.”

This voice in your head comments on everything you do. Sometimes, it's supportive and positive: “You did a great job on that project,” you might hear it say. Or, “that was a really nice thing for you to do.” Or, “you GO girl!” We all have at least some areas of our life where we feel competent and good about our skills and abilities. Whether it's cooking, driving, fixing things, using technology, or playing a sport, these are the areas (and times) when our self-talk is likely to be positive. But in the areas where we don't feel confident, this voice can be abusive and brutal: “I'll never amount to anything.” Or, “I'm a total klutz.” Or, “I'm a moron when it comes to technology.”

At other less predictable times it can be negative and unsupportive for no apparent reason: “That was a stupid idea,” you might hear this voice say as you pull onto a highway and see that the traffic is stopped. “You idiot!” you might hear the voice say when you make a careless mistake. Or, “this report is going to take forever to write. I'll NEVER get it done in time!”

The voice often comes to completely false and overly negative conclusions. “I'm a terrible parent. My children NEVER behave. People are ALWAYS interrupting me.” The voice LOVES to exaggerate the severity of a negative event. “This is probably the worst job ever!”

According to WebMD, “Unwanted thoughts can make you feel anxious or depressed. They may keep you from enjoying your life.” All cognitive work begins with recognizing overly negative self-talk like the examples just mentioned. It sounds like it ought to be easy to eradicate but amazingly, this negative self-talk is surprisingly tenacious and often surreptitious. We are so in the HABIT of commenting on who we are, what we do, and how we behave that we barely even notice it happening. That's why APPRAISE starts with this important first sub-step: **FIRST BECOME AWARE OF YOUR NEGATIVE SELF-TALK.**

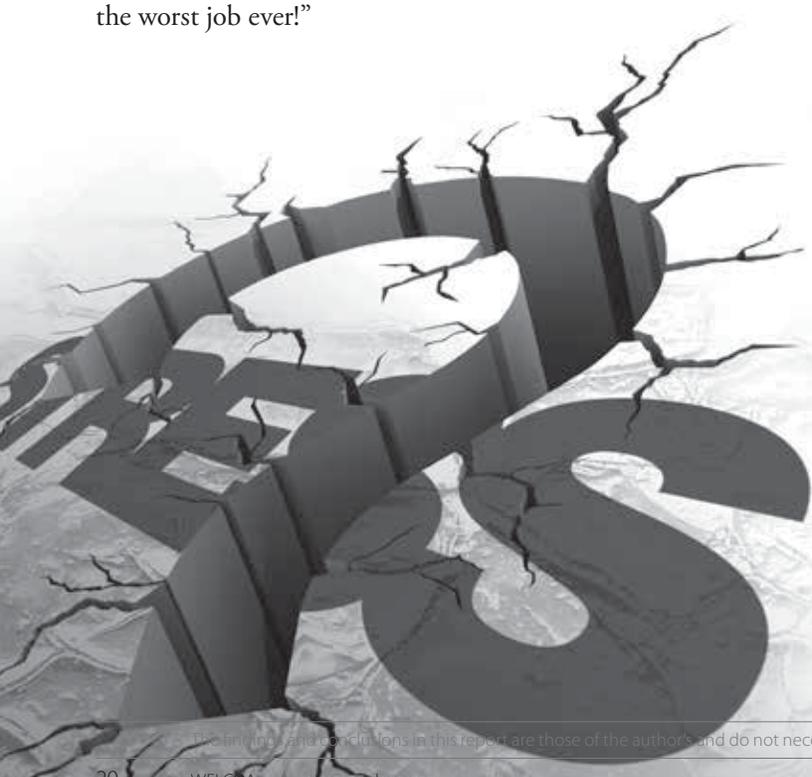
According to the Mayo Clinic website people who are able to turn their overly negative thinking around and make it positive will enjoy:

- Increased life span
- Lower rates of depression
- Lower levels of distress
- Greater resistance to the common cold
- Better psychological and physical well-being
- Reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease
- Better coping skills during hardships and times of stress

No one is exactly sure why thinking positively—as opposed to thinking negatively—is so beneficial to one's health but as the Mayo Clinic website points out, it may have to do with reducing stress: “One theory is that having a positive outlook enables you to cope better with stressful situations, which reduces the harmful health effects of stress on your body.”

Once we become aware of our overly negative thinking, we can use techniques like the ones described in the following pages to help transform it or at least neutralize it, right on the spot. The Mayo Clinic concludes: “with practice, eventually your self-talk will contain less self-criticism and more self-acceptance. You may also become less critical of the world around you. Plus, when you share your positive mood and positive experience, both you and those around you enjoy an emotional boost.”

Teaching cognitive restructuring at work begins with making people aware of their negative self-talk. You can do this by



STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

having people count backwards from a hundred by 7s or engaging in something silly like the hokey pokey. Men generally hate doing this. Why? Because their self-talk is saying “I don’t want to embarrass myself in public.” After you get a group to try something silly, ask the unenthusiastic people why they didn’t want to participate? And then show them how powerful their self-talk is that it wouldn’t permit them to be involved.

Seeing The Big Picture

Seeing the big picture, or putting your stress in perspective, is a simple, cognitive technique for neutralizing negative self-talk. This idea of seeing the big picture has been talked about and written about by psychologists for decades. Abraham Maslow, in his book *Personality And Motivation*, writes that self-actualized people have “the wonderful capacity to appreciate again and again...the basic goods of life, with awe, pleasure, wonder, even ecstasy however stale these experiences have become to others.”

According to the book *Mind Body Health* by N. Lee Smith, MD (et. al) “Plenty of evidence suggests that the way you perceive stress has a lot to do with how stress affects you.” Stress researcher Dr. Robert Eliot who wrote several books on stress recalls an incident he observed while traveling in Saudi Arabia. “Two men, both driving Mercedes, crashed into each other. Uninjured, the two men jumped out of their cars and began hugging and laughing instead of yelling at each other.” Curious about their

odd exchange, Dr. Eliot asked his interpreter what the two men were saying. The interpreter explained that the two men were thanking Allah for the chance to meet in this way.

Nothing helps you deal with stress quite like putting your stress in perspective. Astronauts still come back from space permanently changed by seeing the world from a different perspective. (And it’s something we all experience every time we look up at the stars on a clear night.) Chris Hadfield, former astronaut and author of the book, *An Astronaut’s Guide To Life On Earth*, writes that from the very start, astronauts are trained to handle stress differently than the rest of us: “Astronauts have these qualities [of being able to handle stress better] because we’re taught to view the world—and ourselves—differently. It’s mostly just a matter of changing your perspective.”

Dr. Albert Ellis developed a simple exercise for keeping your problems in perspective (that doesn’t require going into space to get it). Whenever you feel stressed, imagine where this stress falls on a scale of 1-100. One would be the equivalent of a broken shoelace and 100 would be the equivalent of a nuclear holocaust. Using this simple method to shift your PERSPECTIVE it’s easy to see how many annoying or frustrating things would suddenly seem less stressful. Another way to achieve this same shift is to ask yourself: Will I remember this a month from now, a week from now or even a day from now? Here again, it’s surprising how many things that stress us out in the moment are so quickly forgotten.



STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Still another way to keep your stress in perspective is to simply walk away and/or take a break from it whenever possible. Neuroscience tells us that our emotions literally hijack our thinking brain in stressful situations. This makes it very hard to do creative problem-solving because the part of our brain responsible for doing this is shut down. This is why walking away (or moving on) from the stressor, for at least a few minutes or better yet, a few hours, will give you a fresh perspective. And if the problem occurs toward the end of the work day, try sleeping on it.

In the book *Well-Being* authors Tom Rath and Jim Harter describe a study where German workers were given a complex problem to solve in several long sessions at work. Those who were allowed to go home and sleep in between sessions were much more likely to solve the problem than those who tried to solve it in concurrent sessions with no rest period in between.

Seeing The Big Picture At Work

Much of the stress we experience at work is the result of what are known as “the daily hassles.” According to a research paper by Dov Zohar published in the *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, the severity of these daily hassles “predicted end-of-day mood, fatigue and subjective workload.” The author goes on to say that “current models of occupational stress typically ignore these obstacles or hassles as a source of stress.” Little things like interruptions, equipment malfunctions, and inappropriate behavior of co-workers play a surprisingly important role in determining how well people feel at the end of the work day.

Seeing the big picture is a key part of how we appraise these minor hassles that interrupt our goal-directed behavior. In order to be successful in the workplace we have to learn how to turn these minor hassles into forgotten memories as quickly as humanly possible.

Not Blaming Others

We all tend to blame others for difficult circumstances or the bad things that happen to us, and in some cases, this blame is entirely justified. Extenuating circumstances like natural disasters, wars, and major illnesses are beyond our power to control. But when we get into the habit of blaming outside forces for every single thing that happens to us, this habit can leave us feeling powerless and out of control.

A sense of control is vital to managing stress. Psychologists refer to this as having a strong “internal locus of control.”

Maintaining this internal locus of control means that you feel like YOU are in the driver’s seat of your own life. Having an “external locus of control” means the opposite. You feel like someone else is in the driver’s seat of your life.

You explain away everything bad that happens to you as “not your fault.” The reason you got passed over for a raise, the reason you don’t earn as much money as your next door neighbor or the reason you are in a bad mood all the time is entirely the fault of someone else. This attitude of always blaming others for the bad things that happen to you is what results in you having this external locus of control.

Often referred to as “playing the blame game,” this is a game you are bound to lose. According to an article in *Psychology Today* entitled *Give Yourself Credit By Not Blaming Others*, author Dr. Clifford Lazarus writes: “It’s amazing how many people deflect responsibility for their actions and choices and blame others or circumstances for their problems. While playing the ‘blame game’ is common, too much deflection of responsibility is actually a self-defeating behavior pattern.”

“Those who insist on placing responsibility on factors beyond their control will tend to feel powerless and helpless. Only by accepting personal responsibility for our choices and actions can we enable ourselves to feel effective and more in control of our lives,” Dr. Lazarus continues. The key to avoid feeling out of control when things go wrong is to avoid blaming outside circumstances for the problem and try to determine what role YOU may have had in creating it.

When you ALWAYS blame others for a problem, you are handing the keys for solving it over to someone else. How can YOU solve the problem if it was THEIR fault? YOU are powerless. But when you look deeper, and accept responsibility for creating even some small aspect of the situation, then you get your power back. You retake control of the situation. So you may be able to prevent the problem from ever happening again, simply by changing one or two small details if and when the situation should ever arise again.

Teaching people to take responsibility in the workforce is as simple as creating a blame/responsibility worksheet. This worksheet (on the following page) will help people contemplate their own roles in creating their own problems, without attempting to put all the blame on any one person.

Blame/Responsibility Worksheet

List three problems at work that I had a personal stake in.

1

What role, if any, did I have in creating this problem?

What role, if any, did another person or the company have in creating this problem?

What can I do differently to avoid the problem in the future?

Can I control the outcome of this problem in the future?

2

What role, if any, did I have in creating this problem?

What role, if any, did another person or the company have in creating this problem?

What can I do differently to avoid the problem in the future?

Can I control the outcome of this problem in the future?

3

What role, if any, did I have in creating this problem?

What role, if any, did another person or the company have in creating this problem?

What can I do differently to avoid the problem in the future?

Can I control the outcome of this problem in the future?

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Learning To Expect Stress

Most people are surprised by every stressful event that happens. Sometimes this surprise element causes more stress than the event itself. When we expect stress, we prepare for the unexpected, and we acknowledge that unexpected events happen every single day. According to the Mayo Clinic: “*Stressful events are a fact of life. And you may not be able to change your current situation. But you can take steps to manage the impact these events have on you.*” One of the best ways to do this is learning to EXPECT STRESS.

For example, let’s look at commuting, which often causes people a lot of stress. For some reason, many people are surprised, and as a result stressed, by traffic delays in the morning, even though to some extent, these delays are entirely PREDICTABLE. A person who learns to EXPECT STRESS would take the predictability of this potential stressor into account and use it to his or her advantage by allowing extra time for delays. Or at the very least this person would not be surprised by it and therefore stressed.

A person who learns to EXPECT STRESS also has to be prepared even WHEN things go wrong UNEXPECTEDLY. (Because, let’s face it, they often do.) Astronaut Chris Hadfield writes about being prepared for the unexpected. “A fire is one of the most dangerous things that can happen in a spaceship because there’s nowhere to go.” But this is a contingency that every astronaut trains for, in very real simulations over and over again. As the result of this preparedness when the smoke alarm sounded while Hadfield was on the space station he recalls: “I doubt anyone’s heart rate increased by more than a beat or two while we were dealing with those fire alarms, even during the first minutes when the threat of a raging inferno seemed most real. We felt competent to deal with whatever happened—a sense of confidence that comes directly from solid preparation.”

When a crisis does arise, getting stressed out doesn’t help you resolve it one bit. That’s why being prepared for the unexpected is SO important. As we pointed out in SEE THE BIG PICTURE, your creative problem solving ability is literally hijacked when you get stressed BUT learning to EXPECT STRESS and TRAINING for it helps you override this circuit, literally rewiring your own brain so you stay calm when stressful situations come about UNEXPECTEDLY. (The central tenet of this step is remembering that you have to learn to EXPECT the UNEXPECTED!)

Astronauts SIMULATE stressful events so that they feel calm when the event arises and they aren’t surprised by it in anyway. They do

this so often they abbreviate the word and call it a SIM. They have a mental checklist, ready to go in case of any contingency. “Nothing boosts confidence quite like...realizing you have the ability to *work the problem.*” Hadfield writes. “Each time you manage to do that your comfort zone expands a little, so if you ever face that particular problem in real life, you’re able to think clearly.”

Learning To Expect Stress At Work

Many of the tasks we perform in the workplace have a certain sense of time pressure associated with them. This sense of urgency is what drives most businesses; it’s why people want things when they want them. It’s what helps people make up their minds to spend money. Once you see how urgency drives most businesses decisions, you’ll learn to expect this major aspect of stress every time you go to work. As a wellness professional or trainer, you might want to help create a list of recurring stressors in the work place that are just like the traffic jam example at the beginning of this section: The stressful events that hit people by surprise, yet are entirely to be expected.

In the book *Coping With Stress At Work*, author Dr. John D. Adams writes: “In order to remove or prevent unwarranted stress in organizations, a new paradigm is necessary which is ‘preventive’ in nature. This paradigm would encourage and even require more emphasis on the anticipation of problems...and on acting in ways to minimize these problems or prevent them from occurring at all.” Creating this new preventive paradigm is what this whole report is about and *learning to expect stress* is just one important aspect of doing that.

Accurately Appraising The Situation Plus Your Ability To Handle It

In order to take full advantage of this step, you need your appraisal of EVERY stressful situation to be as accurate as possible. When we FAIL to do this, it often causes us unnecessary pain and anguish. Psychologist Richard Lazarus writes that “emotions flow from how we appraise what is happening in our lives. In effect the way we evaluate an event determines how we react emotionally.”

Unfortunately, our muddled thinking often distorts our appraisal of stressful events. In fact, the tendency of ALL people to do this is what inspired both Drs. Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck to create a whole new branch of psychology now known as cognitive behavioral therapy, which focuses on people’s thinking.

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Ellis and Beck wanted to give people tools that they could use to make better appraisals of situations while their stress was happening. To that end, Dr. Ellis created a simple equation to help people see exactly how the sequence of a stressful event unfolds. This equation is so profound it can be found in hundreds of college text books and thousands of self-help books. The equation is simply: $A + B = C$. These letters stand for: *The Activating event plus your Belief equals the Consequence.*

A is the stressor. B is your *appraisal* of the stressor. And C is how you feel inside as the result of the stressor PLUS your appraisal. Most people think that stressors automatically equal stress. But this is NOT the case. The appraisal (B) almost always comes between the stressful event (A) and how you feel inside (C). However, most people think that every stressful event leads DIRECTLY to stress. What Ellis's equation shows us is there is almost always a thought or belief or interpretation or appraisal that comes between what happens to us and how we take it.

In order to see how this equation works in a real life situation all you have to do is imagine how your thinking might go if you discovered you had a flat tire on the way to work. For some people it might go like this: *I can't believe I got a flat tire. This is the worst possible time to get a flat. If I'm late to work today, I'm going to miss that client meeting, and if I lose my client, I could lose my job.* This is an example of how an activating event can quickly spiral out of control and cause you a great deal of stress.

Compare that to an entirely different appraisal concerning the flat tire. For other people it might go like this: *Everybody gets a flat tire now and then, it's no big deal. I'll call a friend to help me out, or I'll call emergency roadside service, or I'll change it myself. How hard can it be? I can handle this, I know I can.*

Notice how the second appraisal involves not only changing one's views about the situation but about one's own ability to handle the stressor. We need to be wary of not only our tendency to overestimate the severity of a problem, but our tendency to underestimate our ability to cope with it. This is especially true when it comes to handling problems at work.

Accurately appraising a stressful situation at work and one's ability to handle that situation. When our appraisals of a situation are inaccurate, it leads to all kinds of communication problems at every level of an organization. We make blanket statements about others that simply aren't true because of our

natural tendency to exaggerate the negative circumstances of a situation. If an employee comes in late only once a week for five weeks straight, his supervisor might be tempted to admonish this employee by saying: "You are ALWAYS coming in late." Of course the employee could correctly argue that four out of five days a week he comes in on time. Not being late at all may be important here, but appraising the situation accurately is important too because it greatly improves the chances of good communication.

A front page story in the *New York Times* reported "The one workplace stress-reduction technique that seems to out-perform all others is cognitive restructuring." This was confirmed in the research paper quoted earlier entitled, *Effects Of Occupational Stress Management Intervention Programs, A Meta Analysis*. In that paper, the authors write that cognitive-behavioral interventions "encourage individuals to take charge of their negative thoughts, feelings, and resulting behavior by changing their cognitions and emotions to more adaptive ones."

Teaching people how to change their appraisals at work is often as simple as teaching people the $A + B = C$ equation. See the next page for products that can help you do this.

Step 3 Review

Become aware of your negative self-talk at work. Saying things like "I've got the world's worst boss" or "this job is going to take forever to finish," makes your job even more difficult.

Seeing the big picture at work. Much of the stress we experience at work is the result of what are known as "the daily hassles" that assault us on a regular basis. In order to rise above these inevitable irritants we need to put them in their proper perspective.

Not blaming others at work. Taking responsibility for all aspects of your job will put you on the fast track to success because it separates you from the vast majority of people who don't realize how they undermine their own sense of power by blaming outside forces like the economy, challenging circumstances and difficult co-workers for all the bad things that happen to them.

Learning to expect stress at work. Many of the tasks we perform in the workplace have a certain sense of time pressure associated with them. This sense of urgency is what drives most businesses; it's why people want things when they want them. Once you see how urgency drives most business decisions, you'll learn to expect this major aspect of stress every time you go to work.

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Accurately appraising a stressful situation and one's ability to handle it at work. When our appraisals of a situation are inaccurate, it leads to all kinds of communication problems between workers and supervisors and between co-workers too. We make blanket statements about others that simply aren't true because of our natural tendency to exaggerate the negative circumstances of a situation.

Cognitive techniques like those just listed can easily be taught to people in organizations with some of the products and tools listed below.

Pamphlet: *Practical Stress Management*. A short, inexpensive primer on cognitive restructuring which for the purposes of this brochure is called practical stress management. This eight panel trifold brochure teaches people how their thinking influences their experience of stress. In simple language everyone can understand, this brochure will raise awareness about how to use this cognitive method for managing stress. Price: Depending on quantity ordered \$0.45 to \$0.25 ea. (available from StressStop.com)

Workbook: *Thinking Person's Workbook For Managing Stress*. Simple to use, easy to read, the one page articles in this 32-page book and the accompanying do-it-yourself workbook pages help people understand key concepts in cognitive restructuring like negative self-talk, disputing, awfulizing, low frustration tolerance, reframing, and more. Price: \$10–\$1.50 depending on quantity purchased (available from StressStop.com)

Web-Based Training: *Thinking Well*. Games, video clips, puzzles, and interactive activities help teach the user the basics of cognitive restructuring. This training teaches people how to deal with stressful situations by simply changing the way they think about them. It shows them how their interpretation of a stressful situation leads to even more stress and more problems. You can license this product to put up on your company website. Price: Depending on size of license purchased \$5. to 0.25 ea. (Available from StressStop.com)

Training Kit: *The ABC's of Cognitive Restructuring*. This training includes a three-ring binder and PowerPoint slides for up to three hours of training in cognitive restructuring. It also includes two DVDs, handouts, plus a complete word-for-word transcript of a sample presentation. You will have everything you need to begin teaching cognitive restructuring within days of receiving this training kit. Price: \$299 (available from StressStop.com)

Mobile Device App: *The CBT Referee*. CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) Referee helps you evaluate your thinking from a completely neutral point of view which is a crucial part of cognitive restructuring. Half the battle is simply getting the thought out of your head and down into written form. The very act of writing down the thought is therapeutic. Price: \$4.99. (The CBT referee is available on iTunes and Google Play)

Step 4. Accept

Accepting certain situations that you can't change is a vital part of learning how to manage and prevent stress. One of the best ways of putting this skill into action is through the practice of mindfulness. In this section, the word ACCEPT is shorthand for the word mindfulness.

Mindfulness is often defined as “present moment awareness with acceptance.” According to a recent cover story in *Time* magazine, entitled *The Mindfulness Revolution*, “mindfulness is intended to help practitioners quiet a busy mind by becoming more aware of the present moment and less caught up in what happened earlier or what is to come.” But what is “present moment awareness” and how can it possibly help us lower our stress?

Much of our anxiety is the result of ANTICIPATING what's going to happen tomorrow: the root-canal appointment, the big presentation and the surgical procedure you have to have are all examples of future events the mind loves to obsess about. Much of our anger, on the other hand, is the result of past events that can't be changed: the argument you had with your spouse, the criticism your boss unexpectedly leveled on you, or the rude remark a co-worker made. Thoughts of the future and thoughts of the past whirl around in our heads: Sometimes in an almost dysfunctional way.

When you find yourself getting angry over things that happened in the past, or nervously anticipating an event that has yet to be, you are no longer in the present moment. These departures from “the NOW” fuel your emotional fires, and stir up your anxieties. “Many cognitive therapists recommend mindfulness to their patients as a way to help cope with anxiety and depression. More broadly, it's seen as a means to deal with stress,” explains the authors of the *Time* magazine article mentioned above. “Scientists have been able to prove that...rigorous mindfulness training can lower cortisol levels and blood pressure, increase immune response and possibly even effect the way our genes are expressed.”

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

It comes as no surprise that cognitive therapists are recommending mindfulness because mindfulness takes up where cognitive restructuring leaves off. It's the perfect next step in the six step model. Cognitive restructuring simply says when you see your thinking is irrational change it. But what happens when we know we are acting irrationally and we can't change it?

That's where mindfulness comes to the rescue. Whereas cognitive restructuring asks us to CHANGE an irrational thought, mindfulness simply suggests that we learn to co-exist with our irrational thinking by learning to recognize it for what it is and ACCEPT it, but not necessarily try to change it. How you go about doing that will be the focus of the next five steps.

Name it and tame it

Accept what is and can't be changed

Accept the fact you can't accept it

Everyday mindfulness practice

Mindfulness meditation

Name It And Tame It

One of the fundamental tenets of mindfulness is the idea that our thinking is often flawed. Westerners, however, are raised on the notion that our THINKING is unassailable. You become what you think about was the catch phrase of the 1980s. French philosopher, Rene Descartes, clearly put thinking on a pedestal when he famously said "I think therefore I am."

This Cartesian model of putting the mind in charge of the body and treating the WHOLE body like a machine with separate moving parts (that could be treated separately with little or no consideration for other parts) has been the predominant medical model now for almost 400 years.

To question this model, or the idea that we are NOT what we think about, borders on blasphemy. And yet, that's exactly what mindfulness is asking us to do. Mindfulness teaches us that much of our stress and tension is CREATED by our thinking and our inability to perceive the world as it truly is. It suggests that our perception is flawed at best, and what we then perceive we instantly interpret. And that this interpretation is based more on past events and circumstances than it is on what is going on IN THE PRESENT MOMENT.

UCLA psychologist, Dr. Daniel Siegel, in his book *The Mindful Brain* identifies five aspects of mindfulness that will ALSO serve as the basis of understanding the concept NAME IT AND TAME IT.

1. **Non-reactivity to inner experience:** Perceiving feelings without having to react to them.
2. **Observing/noticing/attending to sensations, perceptions, thoughts, feelings:** Remaining present with these sensations and feelings even when they are unpleasant or painful.
3. **Acting with awareness and not on automatic pilot:** Thus avoiding accidents, spilling things, and having one's attention scattered.
4. **Describing /labeling with words:** Putting beliefs, opinions, and expectations into words.
5. **Nonjudgmental of experience:** Not criticizing oneself for having irrational emotions.

Name it and tame it combines ALL these features of mindfulness and puts them into one step by focusing on awareness of exactly what's happening in the present moment. As we said earlier, a lot of our behavior is based on past events that have absolutely no bearing on the present moment. Lifelong habits, childhood traumas, and irrational beliefs drive much of what we say and do at any given moment. When these influences from the past play out in our daily lives—without our conscious awareness—at the very least, it can result in a lot of *suffering*.

Name it and tame it helps us bring subconscious influences to the surface by making us more aware of what's popping up from the past. If you tend to be fearful, worried, angry, pessimistic or even a procrastinator, if you are like most people, you are constantly trying to pretend these feelings aren't affecting you in the present moment. Mindfulness believes that the path to healing these counter-productive behavioral patterns is to do the opposite. Mindfulness suggests that you go toward the unpleasant emotions you have around being this way and by doing so take the sting out of them and often minimize their power to control you.

Whenever you feel an unpleasant emotion arising, instead of trying to pretend it's not there, you simply name it (and

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

ultimately tame it). *Oh, there's that fear arising; there's that anger arising; there's that worry; there's that tendency to procrastinate.* The really hard part here is to hold this in awareness without creating a judgment about it being BAD. Because to get back to the issue with Descartes, the tendency here is to see this THINKING PATTERN as WHO YOU ARE. But mindfulness says it's just a fleeting ASPECT of you, it's NOT who you ARE.

Instead of letting the feeling trigger a round of irrational self-talk you STAY with the feeling, kind of riding it like a wave. What you will notice when you do this is that yes, these emotions pop up, sometimes unexpectedly and can be quite intense, but they also recede and by staying with the emotion, and ignoring the story your mind wants to make up about how BAD you are for thinking this way, you can sometimes metabolize that emotion quite quickly, or at the very least be able to function productively right along with it.

Harvard Medical School health writer, Michael Craig Miller, M.D. agrees. "Many people try to tune out stress. A healthier approach may be to tune into it. Paying more attention to what is going on around you, not less, is the first step toward cultivating mindfulness, an excellent technique to help you cope with a range of mental and physical problems, including stress."

So if the emotion of anger arises when a particular co-worker comes in the room, you notice it. Oh I'm feeling anger. Wow, look at that. It's OK to feel angry. It's natural. You accept your anger rather than try to rationalize it away. This process of staying with emotions, but not getting caught up in the story around them (my co-worker is such a jerk!) helps you cultivate the notion that YOU are NOT necessarily what you think about.

This is how you learn to name it and tame it.

Name it and tame it at work. Obviously, there's nothing to stop you from using this technique at work. You may be dealing with emotions like frustration, anger and/or boredom. When these feelings come up at work, by all means pay attention to them. Noticing who, what, where and when these emotions arise will teach you a lot.

Also, remember to not necessarily label these emotions or the people and situations that cause them to arise as bad. It's more likely some story about the person from the past that is causing

these emotions to arise, not what is happening in the present moment. Tune into the present moment and ask yourself: Is what's happening NOW causing this feeling or is it a story I'm clinging onto from the past? If it's a story, then lock in, if you can, to the peace you find in the present moment and focus on that instead.

Teaching people to name it and tame it in the workplace, as with all mindfulness practices, takes time. Keep in mind, you are attempting to change people's mindsets here and that doesn't happen overnight. When organizations attempt to bring mindfulness into the workplace, that's often done by hiring an outside vendor to teach employees an eight-week course in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction or MBSR. These courses are typically taught NOT on company time and involve one two-hour meeting a week and one weekend "retreat day" which is considered to be a vital part of the overall program. Participants are asked to meditate for 45 minutes every day, six days a week. From the graduates of that course, you can usually get some mindfulness champions who will further promote mindful changes in the organization from the ground up.

Accept What Is And Can't Be Changed

Acceptance is the key to letting go of mounds of stress and tension. "For many of us," Harvard professor, Dr. Ronald Siegel writes in his book *The Mindfulness Solution*, "cultivating an accepting attitude toward our experience is both the most important and the most challenging part of mindfulness practice. Acceptance allows us to be open to both pleasure and pain, to embrace both winning and losing, and to be compassionate with ourselves and others when mistakes are made."

It's hard to be happily ensconced in the present moment when you discover a mistake has been made, whether that mistake is minor like a mixed up take out order, or something much bigger, like someone smashing into your brand new sports car. "While it can be disturbing to notice how...much grief we cause ourselves by NOT accepting things as they are, there is good news: [acceptance] can be cultivated," Dr. Siegel writes. Often times it's our judgment about things that gets in the way between us and acceptance.

Dr. Siegel uses the previously described technique of naming it and taming it to show just how judgmental our self-talk can be, even when we are trying to practice mindfulness meditation:

“Hmm, I’m doing pretty well with this meditation. No judgments yet. *Whoops, that’s judging.* Uh oh, I should have known I wouldn’t be good at this. *Judging.* OK, OK, I get it, no more of that. I’ll just follow my breath rising and falling. There that’s better. *Judging.* Wow, I am relentlessly judgmental about everything! *Judging.*”

In mindfulness practice one learns to recognize how quick the mind is to pass judgment and how harsh these judgments can be, even when applied to one’s self. We spend our whole life judging what we do, what others do and it ultimately inflicts a lot of pain and suffering on us and those around us. Sometimes the quickest way to learn how to accept what happens to us is to start by practicing what in mindfulness is referred to as “non-judgment.”

Think for a moment of ANY sporting contest you’ve ever seen or participated in, or perhaps even a sales promotion contest at work. Our culture does not take kindly to losers or even coming in second place for that matter. Mindfulness helps us accept the fact that in every contest there will always be winners and losers and people come in second place. This is obvious, but here’s the subtly of mindfulness: It teaches that winning and losing are really *two sides of the same coin*. You can’t have winning without losing. And you couldn’t fully experience the joy of winning if you hadn’t *already* experienced the PAIN of loss.

We don’t ALWAYS win, children misbehave, friends let us down, and people get sick and die. It’s not bad, it’s not awful, *it just is*. Accepting what is and can’t be changed is what helps us through these periods of disappointment and low-mood often fueled by a judgment that says “life shouldn’t be this way.”

To quote Dr. Siegel again: “Acceptance allows us to say yes to the parts of our personality we want to eliminate or hide (like the overly judgmental part). It’s at the heart of how mindfulness allows us to work effectively with fear, worry, sadness, depression, physical pain, addictions, and relationship difficulties—all of which are perpetuated by our refusal to accept some thought, feeling, or other experience.”

Accept what is and can’t be changed at work. You didn’t get that promotion; you have a boss who doesn’t communicate well; your office is noisy; there are lots of distractions at work.

You’ll notice a sense of peace and calm comes over you when you accept what is and can’t be changed at work. The trick is knowing what really IS unchangeable and what’s worth trying to change. A verbally abusive boss is definitely NOT something you need to accept. However, most people—at best—feel a little uncomfortable with their boss; this is just a fact of life and that is something you must accept.

Tom Rath and Jim Harter, the authors of the book *Well-Being* write that according to Gallup surveys, “spending time with the boss is two to four times as unpleasant as spending time with friends. This is even more pronounced for men, who report unusually high levels of stress and low levels of happiness when they spend time with their manager or supervisor.”

Teaching people at work how to accept what is and can’t be changed requires patience. See the mindfulness training kit described in the recommended products section for further ideas to help you do this.

Accept The Fact That You Can’t Accept It

Mindfulness is a remarkably fluid and nimble practice which in a sense is proven by this particular step. When you find yourself having trouble accepting something that has happened to you or accepting someone for doing something bad to you—remind yourself that these are judgments—and our judgments aren’t always accurate. But if that doesn’t help you reach acceptance, simply accept the fact you can’t accept it. Imagine someone has cheated you in some way, or has said something rude to you, and you find yourself getting really angry about it. You just can’t forgive this person and you just can’t accept their behavior.

With the practice of acceptance, you can always take another step back and just accept the fact that you can’t accept it. While this may sound silly, you’ll notice that when you do this, a little mental space is created between you and the problem and it releases its hold on you just a bit. Once this space is created you may eventually find it possible to let the whole thing go.

Acceptance is really all-encompassing and not limited in any way. Accept the fact that you can’t accept something proves this beyond a shadow of a doubt. “By letting go of our struggle to control everything,” Dr. Siegel writes “we become less easily thrown by life’s daily ups and downs—and less likely to get caught in emotional problems like depression and anxiety or stress-related physical problems like chronic pain and insomnia.”

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Accept that you can't accept it at work. This is a real winner in the workplace because for a lot of people there are rules and regulations and managers and co-workers and procedures that are just hard to even fathom. No matter how hard you try to accept your boss's criticism for example, every time he points out another error in your work, you find it hard to stomach. In this case, (as long as he or she is not being verbally abusive) focus on accepting the fact that you can't accept it. Realize that this criticism IS hard to take and it would be hard for anyone to take. Accept the fact that you need to keep your job, and this kind of thing just goes with the territory. It's usually far better to go down this road, where you learn to accept what you can't accept, than losing your temper and saying something you may deeply regret later.

Teaching mindfulness concepts like this one at work, again takes patience, and may be helped by some of the products listed on page 34.

Everyday Mindfulness Practice

Mindfulness practice is often divided into two categories, formal mindfulness practice and everyday mindfulness practice. Formal practice refers to the various styles of mindfulness meditation (which we will talk about in the next step of this section). Informal practice refers to the fairly simple techniques you can use to stay in the present moment throughout your day. To understand this aspect of mindfulness let's take a look at its opposite, mindlessness.

There are very few people in this country who have been studying mindfulness, or it's opposite, longer than Harvard Professor Dr. Ellen Langer, who published her first book, entitled *Mindfulness*, in 1989. The quotation below is from page one of that same book:

“One day at a nursing home in Connecticut, elderly residents were each given a choice of houseplants to care for and were asked to make a number of small decisions about their daily routines. A year and a half later not only were these people more cheerful, active and alert than a similar group in the same institution who were not given these choices and

responsibilities but many more of them were still alive. In fact, less than half as many of the decision making, plant minding residents had died as had those in the other group. This experiment, with its startling results, began over ten years of research into what my colleagues and I came to call mindfulness, and of its counterpart, mindlessness.”

This story is a dramatic example of what it means to do things mindfully. But what it doesn't say is how pervasive our tendency is to do things mindlessly. When we do things mindlessly we do them on auto-pilot without even thinking about it. Because much of our life is filled with activities which we can do mindlessly, such as driving, filing, vacuuming, ironing, or any kind of repetitive work we do for our employers from working on an assembly line to flipping burgers, our mind has a tendency to wander off while we are doing these things.

As various researchers have shown from Dr. Ellen Langer to Dr. Daniel Kahneman, this is the natural tendency of the mind to assign activities once learned thoroughly, like walking down a flight of stairs, to the unconscious mind to carry out. Next time you come down a set stairs, notice what happens when you consciously THINK about each step. Be careful, this exercise may literally trip you up.

Our natural tendency to delegate coordination of many tasks to the unconscious mind allows our conscious mind to wander off, and completely miss the present moment. While this might sound like a particularly GOOD idea, as we said at the beginning of this section, the places where we go when we do this are not always such happy places. Often we recall events that made us unhappy or anticipate events that make us nervous. In order to prevent a lot of pain and suffering caused by mindlessness—not to mention the accidents, reduced productivity, and hurt feelings that come from not paying attention to either what you're doing or who you're with—we need to learn how to STAY in the present moment.

Everyday mindfulness practices help us do just that.

Best-selling author Dr. Andrew Weil suggests cutting vegetables with a big, sharp knife because it forces you to remain mindful

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

while doing it. This is an example of an everyday mindfulness practice. Mindfulness author, Thich Nhat Hanh, describes what he calls a tail-light meditation, which he does while driving. He focuses on the road and on the tail lights in front of him, and keeps his attention centered on that. Others describe listening intently, noticing new things, being more aware of bodily sensations as all being ways to practice everyday mindfulness.

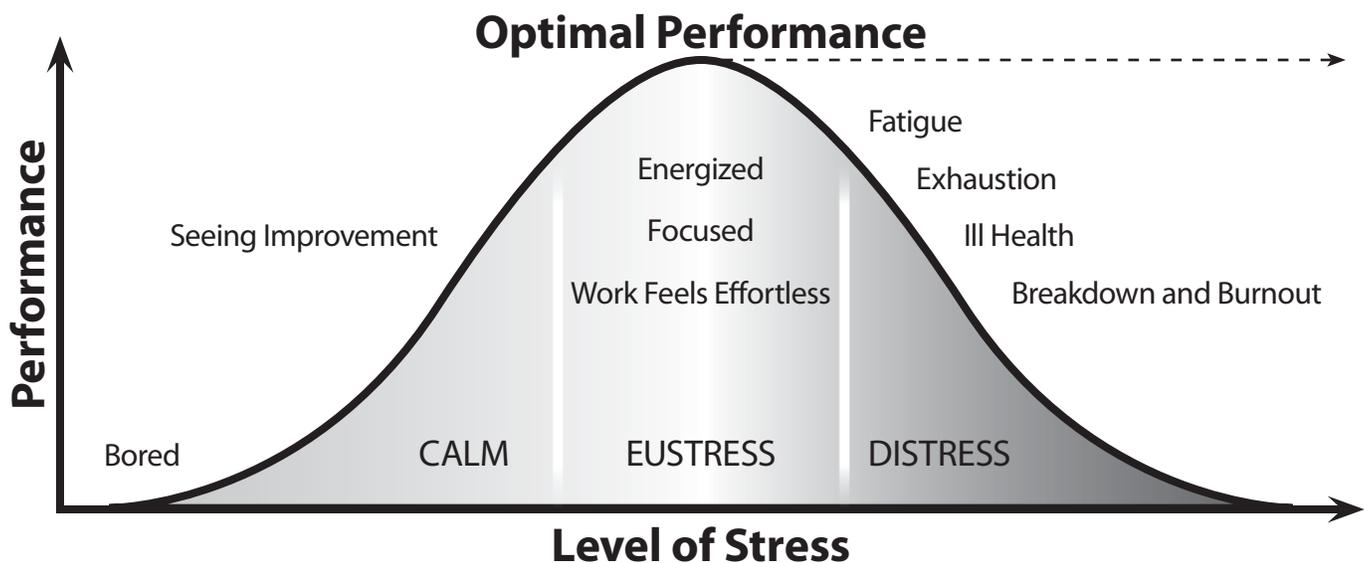
In a video entitled “Ellen Langer on Mindfulness,” Dr. Langer explains: “mindfulness is a remarkable process of noticing new things. If you notice new things—what happens is that puts you in the present, makes you aware of context and perspective, and most important it reveals that we don’t know that thing as well as we thought we did.” She continues: “So if you walked out your door and you noticed five new things. You might notice five new things about the person you’re closest with, five new things about the gadget on your desk, in each case as you notice these new things you’re becoming excited, happier, and you’ll also find it easier and easier to pay attention to that thing you are noticing.”

So the next time you are standing in the shower, instead of going on autopilot and missing out on what a wonderful experience this truly can be, notice five new things about taking a shower: Notice the hot water on your back, notice what happens when you change the temperature of the water, notice the intensity of the water coming out of shower head, notice the smell of the shampoo, and notice the feel of the wash cloth as it scrubs your skin.

This is what it means to engage in everyday mindfulness practice. It’s another way you can proactively reduce stress, on the fly, without taking even a second of your time off in order to do it.

Informal mindfulness practice at work. In the context of the workplace people usually equate informal mindfulness practice with the state of FLOW. This concept, described by psychologist Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihaly, in his book entitled *Flow*, posits “that we often walk through our days unaware and out of touch with our emotional lives,” which is another way of saying we do things mindlessly. The key to getting out of this rut is, as Csikszentmihaly writes, “to challenge ourselves with tasks requiring a high degree of skill and commitment.” These are tasks that you perform at work, that are so engaging that when you do them you are fully immersed in completing the task and you tend to lose all track of time. This is why supermarket cashiers prefer to be busy. They want to be challenged in this way, otherwise, time drags. Finding tasks that produce flow for all workers will introduce the concept of informal mindfulness practice into the workplace.

The idea here is to remember our definition of stress in part two: You want the requirements of the job to match the capabilities of the worker. Take a look at the following diagram: The optimal performance curve. The diagram clearly shows that as a worker’s stress increases, their productivity does also. But only to a point. When a person is at the top of the curve their capabilities and the requirements of their job are in balance. An employee doesn’t want to be under-challenged and doesn’t want to be over-challenged either. See diagram below.



STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

A state of flow is achieved at the top of the curve. Keeping workers at the top of the curve often requires promotions and training that allow them to be continually challenged in new ways. Once the employee gets to the point where they've mastered what they do, and can do it by rote, it's time to introduce new challenges and new training that can take that employee to the next level, and continue to achieve a sense of flow.

Formal Mindfulness Practice

With formal mindfulness practice, you are engaging in different forms of meditation in order to truly understand what it means to be in the present moment. When researchers and scientists write about the medical benefits of mindfulness, generally these benefits stem from the FORMAL practice of mindfulness.

According to the story mentioned earlier in *Time* magazine "The National Institute of Health (NIH) has funded some 50 clinical trials in the past five years examining the effects of mindfulness on health. The NIH trials completed or now underway include studies on how Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) affects everything from social-anxiety disorder to the body's immune response to human papilloma virus to cancer related fatigue."

In a ground-breaking study published in the journal, *Brain, Behavior And Immunity*, MBSR was shown to reduce inflammation, reduce self-reported symptoms of stress and reduce anxiety. The reason this study was ground-breaking, is that for the first time, MBSR was tested against a control group that received another intervention vs. the previous studies where the control groups did nothing. (In double blind studies usually the control group DOES something similar to what the test group is doing, like take a placebo pill instead of the real pill, for example.) In this latest study the MBSR group outperformed the other group that participated in a HEALTH ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (HEP) during the same period of time in several measures, particularly the measure of reduced inflammation.

Formal mindfulness practice includes such meditation practices as breath awareness, thought watching, and sonic meditation. All of these methods increase sensory awareness by intensely focusing on certain aspects of sensory perception. When we are mindless, we've basically shut down our senses. (That's why when you drift off in some daydream, you may not even hear someone calling your name. You've literally shut down your

hearing.) So by focusing on what's coming in through ANY one particular sense we *automatically* create mindfulness. You can't be mindless when you are sensing *anything*.

Breath Awareness is the most common method of formal mindfulness training. While most experts say you need to sit up straight with feet flat on the floor—or sit cross-legged on the floor with your back straight, other experts like Jon Kabat-Zinn say it's OK to meditate lying down flat on the floor, as long as you don't fall asleep. In fact that's what you do at the end of every yoga class during the last five minutes of class.

Breath awareness simply requires that you sit or lie still for 10-20 minutes and notice every breath. You want to notice the in-breath, the out-breath and the slight gap between your out-breath and the next in-breath. Breathe normally, don't hold your breath or try to breathe deeply. You are simply watching every single breath. What you will find when you do this is that your mind will STILL wander. When this happens simply—and non-judgmentally—bring it back to focusing on the breath.

Sonic Meditation is even easier than breath awareness. Sit up and spend 10-20 minutes just focusing on the sounds you are hearing in the space around you. It will probably help you to do this in a relatively quiet space at first, but eventually you will be able to do this in any space at all. Here again, if your mind wanders just bring it back to the object of attention which is the sounds coming into your ears. This is what we mean when we talk about sensory awareness. It's just listening or seeing or touching or feeling or tasting. But you have to really hear what you're listening to, and feel what you are touching and taste what you are eating and SEE what you are seeing.

Thought watching is a way to meditate on your own distracted mind. If you have trouble meditating, this may be the practice for you. The idea here is to simply notice where your thoughts go and where the brain goes when you leave it to its own devices. Eckhart Tolle, who wrote *The Power Of Now*, describes this process as being like a cat watching and waiting for a mouse to come out of a hole in the wall. You wait patiently and notice each unique thought as it appears (in other words, a thought that indicates your mind has wandered, like all of a sudden you are thinking about your root canal appointment next week). When you do this, you'll begin to cultivate an awareness that allows you to watch your scattered mind. It's often called cultivating an awareness below the level of thought. This is the goal of all formal mindfulness practice.

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

All the experts agree that these practices are like exercising a muscle. The article in *Time* magazine describes it this way: “Think of your attention like a muscle. As with any muscle, it makes sense to exercise it (in this case with meditation), and like any muscle, it will strengthen [over time] from that exercise.”

Formal Mindfulness Practice At Work. There are mindfulness practice groups installed in organizations from coast to coast. Once you offer a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Class to your employees you will want to encourage people to meet weekly or monthly to talk about their practice and to engage in group meditation. In addition, you can create a meditation room and like Google and Green Mountain Coffee encourage employees to take meditation breaks. Mindfulness helps people learn how to focus and this trait alone should bring a sufficient ROI to make it worth the small investment required to teach these practices during lunch and learns and before work and during other breaks. Having a one day mindfulness retreat on a Saturday is a great way to do team-building and grow a mindfulness habit at the same time.

Step 4 Review

Name it and tame it encourages you to notice your stressful thoughts and emotions and behavior patterns and move toward them and not away from them. By not labeling these feelings as bad and always trying to squash them, you’ll notice that you can begin to benignly co-exist with them and they will loosen their grip on you.

Name it and tame it at work. Obviously, there’s nothing to stop you from using this technique at work. You may be dealing with emotions like frustration, anger and/or boredom. When these feelings come up at work, by all means pay attention to them. Noticing who, what, where and when these emotions arise will teach you a lot.

Accept what is and can’t be changed. What’s done is done. Grasping on to the way things were, and can no longer be, only leads to pain and suffering. Learning to accept “the full catastrophe of life” is what Jon Kabat-Zinn, in his first book, *Full Catastrophe Living*, writes about. There are no ups without downs and no happiness without occasional sadness. Accepting this reality on a deep level allows us to say “yes” to life.

Accept what is and can’t be changed at work. You didn’t get that promotion, you have a boss who doesn’t communicate well, your office is noisy and there are lots of distractions at work. There’s a sense of peace and calm that comes over you when you accept what is and can’t be changed at work. Try it out and see for yourself.

Accept the fact you can’t accept it. Mindfulness practice is remarkably fluid and nimble. When you have trouble accepting how things are, take a step back and simply accept that you can’t accept them. Allowing this bit of space into your thinking sometimes is just enough to free up your internal river of joy and get it flowing again.

Accept that you can’t accept it at work. This is a real winner in the workplace because for a lot of people there are rules and regulations and people and procedures that are just plain old hard to take. Taking this extra step back allows you to deal with some little things and even some big things with a lot more equanimity.

Everyday mindfulness practice. These are the little practices you can do on the fly that help you stay focused on the present moment. These practices include listening intently, trying to notice new things in your environment, feeling the weight of your body in the chair and really focusing intently on everything you do. Don’t rob yourself of the currency of your life: THIS MOMENT right now, by being MINDLESS.

Informal mindfulness practice at work. In the context of the workplace people usually equate informal mindfulness practice with the state of FLOW. Based on the work of psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihaly, these are the tasks that you perform at work, that you find so engaging and challenging you lose all track of time.

Mindfulness meditation. These formal mindfulness practices include breath awareness, sonic meditation, and thought watching where you focus on one particular aspect of your senses for 10-20 minutes each day. It is these practices that lead to many health benefits we discussed from reducing stress and anxiety to overcoming depression and addiction.

Formal Mindfulness practice at work. There are mindfulness practice groups installed in organizations from coast to coast. These include companies like Google and Green Mountain Coffee that encourage employees to take meditation breaks.

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The following products will help you teach these Acceptance practices at work;

Brochure: *The Five Most Important Things To Know About Using Mindfulness At Work.* Mindfulness can transform the way you work and live by freeing yourself of worries about the future and stories about the past that only get in the way of the present moment. This brochure provides five practical steps you can take to begin incorporating mindfulness practice into the work place. Price: FREE (available from StressStop.com)

Presentation: *Mindfulness Training Kit.* This one-hour program you put on with the help of a word-for-word transcript and a fully illustrated PowerPoint CD enclosed, will help you teach mindfulness. By learning the concepts and techniques taught in this program, like mindfulness meditation, flow, breath awareness, non judgment and non attachment, your audience will naturally begin to reduce their anxiety, handle anger better, communicate better and enjoy life more. Includes a three-ring binder and PowerPoint CD or download it directly at StressStop.com. Price: \$99 for download and \$149 for print version.

CD: *Mindfulness For Beginners with Jon Kabat-Zinn.* This internationally known scientist, bestselling author, and teacher who brought mindfulness meditation into the mainstream of medicine and society explains why mindfulness works to improve various health outcomes and guides the listener through a mindfulness meditation. Can be purchased with CE credits. Price: Download \$10.48 CD \$13.37 (Available from SoundsTrue.com)

Mobile Device App: *Calm.com* is a mindfulness phone app now available for iPhone and Android. Calm.com can help you meditate, sleep, relax, and much more. By downloading this app, you'll discover how meditation can improve your mood—and your life. Learn how to meditate with seven guided mindfulness meditation sessions from two minutes to 20 minutes. (Available free from iTunes)

Step 5. Activate

Experts tell us that inactivity kills. According to Harvard Medical School health newsletter author Dr. Michael Craig Miller, “physically inactive people have a 45% greater chance of developing coronary artery disease than active people...and are 40% more likely to develop colon cancer.” On the flip side, Dr. Miller writes, getting active has many benefits: “Adults can gain as many as two hours of life expectancy for every hour of

regular vigorous exercise. Exercise lowers blood pressure, and in women being treated for breast cancer moderate activity cuts the rates of recurrence and death in half.”

Health guru, Dean Ornish, MD agrees. In his book, *The Spectrum*, he writes “exercise helps reverse the aging process, gives you more energy, makes you smarter, and may even help you grow new brain cells. Furthermore, these results suggest a strong biological basis for the role of aerobic fitness in maintaining and enhancing central nervous system health and cognitive functioning. Also, Ornish writes, “regular moderate exercise along with healthier eating and stress management techniques reduces inflammation throughout your body.”

While running on a treadmill or hopping on an exercise bike may seem *unnatural*, we forget that our sedentary lives are unnatural, too. Up until the last century, the average work day included enough movement and strenuous exercise that we didn't need to worry about getting *additional* exercise. Now experts estimate that we spend around 60,000 hours of our adult lives sitting in a chair. Even housework and yard work like washing the dishes and mowing the lawn have been made easier by a variety of labor-saving devices. Our modern lives are leading us down the road to an assortment of health problems exacerbated by inactivity, overeating, and the bombarding of our senses by too much technology.

This point was made perfectly clear by the 2001 PBS series, *Frontier House*. The three families in this reality TV series agreed to live for six months—on a 160 acre ranch in Montana—exactly like pioneers did just prior to the turn of the last century. These families would all eat the same foods, roughly the same amounts of food (supplies were strictly rationed) prepared the same ways, did the same chores and worked the same ways to make ends meet. For example, in this era, sugar was a scarce commodity, so rations of sugar were limited. Not surprisingly, just about every participant on the show lost a significant amount of weight. Not because they went on diets but because they lived a *completely different lifestyle*. This was all very carefully documented with before and after pictures (and weigh-ins) that were quite dramatic.

The takeaway here is that before the industrial revolution, *there would be NO NEED for this ACTIVATE step*. Much of what we're recommending here, from increased sleep, better diet, more exercise, and even more time spent in contemplation, was just a NATURAL part of life back before the 20th century. Strenuous work, eating healthy, eating smaller portions, going

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

to bed early, spending lots of time away from technology seems somewhat *unnatural* to us today, but it's the way human beings have been living for thousands, if not millions of years.

This is not to say that we need to go back in time in order to live healthy lives. But maybe it IS time to consider how generally UNHEALTHY our current lifestyles NATURALLY are. Thus, what we need to do is change our way of living so that working out, eating healthy, and spending time in quiet contemplation—seem NATURAL to us again.

Activate is about creating a MODERN lifestyle, which includes movement, exercise, stretching, contemplation, and a healthy diet *as an integral part of that lifestyle*. You exercise, eat right, get enough sleep and practice yoga on a regular basis, not because you HAVE to but *because you WANT to*. These healthy behaviors have healthy benefits that you can only experience by doing them on a daily basis—which is what ultimately LEADS to YOU wanting to do them. And WANTING to do these behaviors—being intrinsically motivated to do them—is what makes them as automatic for us as it was for the people who had no other choice but to do them in another era, like out on the frontier.

So the five sub-steps we will be focusing on in this section include:

Exercise

Yoga

Nutrition

Self-soothing

Sleep

Exercise

Research shows that exercise not only helps the body, it helps the brain. “For decades we’ve known about one effect of exercise on the brain,” explains Dr. Miller in an article in *Newsweek*, “the endorphin high that makes us feel good during and right after exercise. But regular exercise also improves your mood, decreases anxiety, improves sleep, improves resilience in the face of stress and raises self-esteem.”

Dean Ornish, MD, agrees. “A single exercise session can lower your blood pressure by five to seven mm/HG which may persist for as long as 22 hours. Just walking three or four days per

week for at least a half an hour per day has been shown to significantly lower blood pressure in hypertensive patients.”

The kind of exercise we are referring to in this step includes walking, jogging, biking, swimming, volleyball, basketball, tennis, and even ping pong. It's really anything that gets your heart beating a little faster (than it does while sitting). Eventually, as you get more accustomed to these various forms of exercise, you may *want* to get winded or even perspire, too. In other words, you may want to engage in vigorous exercise as opposed to mild or moderate exercise. The gold standard for exercise used to be 20-30 minutes of *aerobic* exercise three days per week. This recommendation was eventually dropped by the Surgeon General's office and replaced by 30 minutes of walking on most days (which has now been replaced by a slightly more complicated regimen). Interestingly, the Surgeon General's office determined that more people would FOLLOW the revised recommendation of JUST walking—even though the more vigorous exercise was considered more *healthful*.

“While the benefits of moderate exercise are much greater than little or no exercise, several recent studies have shown that vigorous exercise is even better for you,” explains author Anna Kuchment in *Newsweek*. “Almost all cardiovascular risk factors respond significantly better to vigorous exercise than to moderate exercise,” says Brian Duscha, a clinical researcher who specializes in exercise physiology at the Duke University School of Medicine.

Some stress experts have suggested that exercise is a natural outlet for the often, undissipated energy created during the fight or flight response. For our prehistoric ancestors the response was a life-saver. They used it to run faster or fight harder. When we activate the fight or flight response, we typically find ourselves stuck in a situation like a traffic jam or a verbal altercation where we can't fight and we can't flee. There's a lot of energy that is being pent up which would have been put to good use actually fighting or fleeing by our prehistoric ancestors.

Exercise, on the other hand, takes that pent up energy—stored in the muscles throughout the body—and provides an outlet for it, in the form of the ACTIVATION required to do the exercise. That may be why a program of regular exercise has SO many benefits. Exercise reduces the chances of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and certain forms of cancer. It sheds calories, improves mood, eliminates food cravings, and lowers blood pressure. As *Newsweek* magazine proudly proclaimed in a cover story several years ago: “*If all the benefits of exercise were available in pill form, everyone would take it.*”

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Exercise at work. If you work in a large building, sometimes just hand delivering a report or getting some supplies from the other end of the building may provide a health benefit. Remember, the Surgeon General's recommendation for moderate exercise can be accomplished in three 10-minute segments of brisk walking. So if you can find a way to walk 10 minutes to lunch and 10 minutes back, you've covered two-thirds of your daily requirement. Parking at the far end of the parking lot, using stairs whenever possible and wearing a pedometer—and TRACKING the number of steps you take in a day will also help.

As a wellness professional you probably already know that whenever you present a program to a group of people about stress and exercise, there will always be a few regular exercisers in the audience who will be happy to provide strong anecdotal evidence about the connection between regular exercise and reduced stress. Just ask for a show of hands for anyone who exercises on a regular basis (say three to five times a week) and then ask them to share their experiences specifically in regards to reducing stress. Ask the regular exercisers the following question: Would you ever go back to NOT exercising?

This bit of well-placed Q&A may provide motivation to those people in the audience who haven't personally experienced these powerful benefits. And it will give other people in the audience someone they know to talk to about making preparations for taking what Dr. James Prochaska calls the action step.

Organizations can promote walking by handing out pedometers and encouraging people to take walking breaks. There is a movement afoot to design staircases between floors to be larger, open and more enticing than the usual emergency exit type stairs that exist in most buildings. Also encouraging people to work at least part of the day standing up is probably going to be the next health trend in the American workplace. Other options to encourage exercise on the go are walking and standing meetings. Even the Surgeon General's report concludes that ANY form of movement is better than no movement; so anything that you can do to encourage people to move is going to help.

Yoga

Yoga has been shown to provide many health benefits. While research around yoga is still in the nascent stages there are already a few studies published that show yoga can help reduce inflammation and reduce symptoms of chronic pain, anxiety, and depression, while simultaneously boosting the immune system.

Preliminary findings indicate that yoga practice stimulates the release of a neurotransmitter called GABA that is known to turn off the pain centers in the brain.

According to the National Center for Complimentary Medicine (a division of NIH) "Recent studies in people with chronic low-back pain suggest that a carefully adapted set of yoga poses may help reduce pain and improve function (the ability to walk and move). Studies also suggest that practicing yoga (as well as other forms of regular exercise) might have other health benefits such as reducing heart rate and blood pressure, and may also help relieve anxiety and depression."

According to *The British Medical Journal*, yoga may even help alleviate symptoms of asthma (often considered a stress-related health problem). "There was a significantly greater improvement in the group who practiced yoga in the weekly number of attacks of asthma, scores for drug treatment, and peak flow rate. This study shows the efficacy of yoga in the long term management of bronchial asthma."

There are many different ways to practice yoga. You can join a yoga studio; gyms and Y's usually offer free yoga classes as part of the membership fee and of course there are books, magazines, yoga DVDs, and even TV shows you can watch that will teach you how to practice yoga without needing to leave your home. You really don't need much other than a mat and some comfortable clothes to wear in order to practice yoga.

Yoga teacher training classes are now being taught at Duke University's Integrative Medicine Center as part of an evidenced-based program that is being implemented in hospitals across the country. As yoga enters the mainstream, more and more hospitals are offering yoga classes as part of a new trend called complementary or integrative medicine, where the practice of yoga is recommended as an adjunct to more traditional therapeutic approaches to treating chronic pain and arthritis, for example.

Even Dean Ornish, M.D., who changed the medical landscape with his diet and lifestyle approach to managing disease gives credit to the practice of yoga for influencing his own life and work. As Ornish explains in his book *The Spectrum* "gentle yoga stretches can relax chronically tensed muscle groups and increase both physical and mental flexibility. Just as your mind affects your body, so does your body affect your mind. When your body is more relaxed, your mind feels less stressed."

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Yoga at work is often brought about by bringing in a yoga instructor a couple of days a week to conduct classes before work starts. Workers can also be taught and encouraged to learn several basic postures that they can use to relieve back tension, neck tension, and shoulder tension. Why not encourage managers to include a movement break with one, two or three simple standing yoga postures in all meetings lasting more than 30 minutes? There is also a product described on page 41 (*Yoga@Work* video) that gives employees one to two minute yoga stretches they can do while sitting at their desk or work station.

Nutrition

A healthy diet confers so many health benefits that it's hard to quantify them all. According to nutrition expert Dr. Ann Kulze, just taking the one dietary step of consuming more omega 3 oils "will contribute to brain health, dramatically reduce rates of depression, increase hearth health, improve cognitive function and reduce inflammation." Much the same can be said about eating healthy carbs and increasing your consumption of fruits and vegetables. "Plant foods are the most powerful weapons you have for combating chronic disease and aging. Fruits and vegetables provide powerful, broad-spectrum disease protection. Eating a diet chock-full of fruits and vegetables can help ward off heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure, [and] gastrointestinal diseases." Interestingly, these degenerative diseases are often associated with a high-stress lifestyle, too.

Just looking at this from the perspective that ANY illness is stressful, whatever you do to reduce your chances of ending up with a chronic health condition is going to *reduce your stress*. While this is a general, but indirect way in which a healthy diet *prevents* stress; reducing the consumption of caffeine has a *direct effect* on reducing your levels of stress. Two 6-ounce cups of caffeinated coffee double the amount of adrenaline circulating in your bloodstream. As you probably already know, adrenaline is a stress hormone. It's the adrenaline that makes you feel jittery, awake, and a little anxious.

Dr. Dean Ornish advises: "Reduce your exposure to stimulants. Caffeine found in sodas, energy drinks, coffee, tea, and many medications potentiates stress—that is, it shortens your fuse and makes you more reactive to stress." As Ornish further states, "Caffeine and other stimulants don't give you energy; rather you borrow it from yourself. You get an initial rush of energy followed later by feeling really tired." This tiredness is often addressed by imbibing more caffeinated drinks and thus begins a vicious

cycle that is sometimes very hard to break because caffeine is so addictive. Usually the recommendation for limiting your exposure to caffeine is to resist drinking caffeinated beverages after lunch and to limit the total quantity to two cups a day.

Beyond limiting caffeine consumption, the general public needs to understand the impact that certain dietary choices have on their mood and consequently their emotions. We are literally self-regulating our nervous system every time we go to Starbucks or Dunkin' Donuts. If we are feeling stressed, we eat a donut or two or three. (The carb overload causes us to feel tired and sluggish, and consequently less stressed. When we start feeling too tired, we drink a cup of coffee to raise the levels of stress chemicals.) Remember, stress naturally makes us more alert and it's this vigilance that we sometimes feel in the form of anxiety. People often self medicate the feelings of anxiety with a carb overload and the consequent lack of alertness with a cup of coffee.

Such unhealthy choices lead to weight gain and other diet-related health problems like diabetes and heart disease. Once we get in the habit of reaching for these unhealthy foods to manage our moods, the problem tends to get worse and worse as we get more and more dependent on their mood altering qualities.

If you feel tired, sluggish, and demotivated after a high-carb meal, compare this to how you feel after a light, healthy meal like a large salad with a protein topping like broiled chicken, and you will literally have a taste for perhaps what is THE most important concept in this entire report: *that attitudes follow behavior*. Reach for that salad enough times in a row, and you will get accustomed to how much BETTER you feel long AFTER eating. Eventually your attitude changes about eating healthy and this new *attitude* eventually DRIVES the behavior (of CHOOSING to eat healthy) without you having to *motivate* yourself to do it. The motivation is intrinsic.

Nutrition can be addressed at work by making healthier food choices available at vending machines and in the cafeteria. Some organizations have a day of the week where employees are encouraged to bring in a salad, and plastic re-sealable salad bowls are even given away as incentives to people who do so. Educating people about healthy food choices and reduced caffeine consumption can also help.

Teaching employees about the connection between food and mood gives the topic of promoting a healthy diet some new life. Help people realize that when drinking caffeinated beverages

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

we simply *borrow energy from ourselves*, and set ourselves up for a vicious cycle where we need more and more caffeine to make it through the day. And finally help people understand the sleep-inducing effects of high carb meals and the potential pitfalls of loading up on carbs during lunch.

Self-Soothing

Self-soothing is a term used to describe a variety of techniques that help you self-regulate your autonomic nervous system. Until the 1950s Western scientists believed that you couldn't exert any control over your nervous system. That's why it was called the autonomic nervous system. The belief here was that it ran completely on auto-pilot. But scientists and researchers like Harvard professor Herbert Benson, MD and Dr. Elmer Green of the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas proved this wasn't the case. Their research showed that simple techniques, like the ones described below could be learned to self-regulate body temperature, blood pressure, metabolism, heart rate, and breathing rate.

Deep breathing. Also known as abdominal breathing, this breathing lowers stress by increasing oxygen levels in the brain and bloodstream and clearing out carbon dioxide in the lower lobes of the lungs. Deep breathing is often taught by holding a hand over the belly, and watching it rise and fall with every deep in-breath and every extended out breath. Try breathing in to a count of four and breathing out to a count a six. Do this for as little as two minutes and the reduction in stress levels is measurable.

Progressive muscle relaxation. Also known as point by point relaxation, this involves tensing and relaxing various muscle groups throughout the body. One simply moves through the entire body, usually starting with the head and moving downward focusing for a minute or so on each area at a time including stops at the forehead, jaw, neck, shoulders, arms, belly, lower back, buttocks, upper legs, lower legs and feet (which all typically hold a lot of stress). At every stopping point, one tenses the muscles in that area as much as possible for a count of five to 10 seconds and then allows the muscles to relax immediately afterwards. This technique, developed by Harvard-trained Dr. Edmund Jacobsen in the 1930s has been popular for decades.

Body scan simply involves going through the entire body—point by point—and focusing on that area and just ALLOWING the muscles in that area to relax. Taking a deep breath in for each area and imagining the tension leaving that area with the breath going out. This exercise is often done with a person lying down flat on the floor or on a bed and works well as an adjunct to progressive muscle relaxation. Start from the top of the head and move down point by point to the tips of the toes.

Guided imagery is another way to self-soothe. According to Belleruth Naparstek, an expert in this field, “just 10 minutes of guided imagery a day can reduce blood pressure, lower cholesterol, and heighten short term immune cell activity. It lessens headaches and pain and reduces anxiety and even reduces the adverse effects of chemotherapy.” The easiest way to try this technique is by listening to the various CDs and podcasts you can download that teach it.

Meditation. A simple way to learn how to meditate is to simply focus on your breathing. Here are six steps for how to do a mindfulness “breath awareness” meditation: 1. Sit up straight in a chair, feet flat on the floor (Or, if you prefer, sit cross-legged on a cushion on the floor). 2. Notice your breath. Don't change it. Just notice each in-breath, each out-breath and gap between the out-breath and the next in-breath. 3. As you notice your mind wandering as it naturally will during your meditation, just bring it back to focusing on the breath as in step 2. 4. Don't judge yourself or your ability to meditate or try to force out distractions. Just make a mental note (or observation) of each distraction and then bring your focus back to your breath. 5. Start by meditating five to 10 minutes a day. Work on making whatever length of time you choose a daily habit. It's the daily habit of meditation that confers the benefits of meditation over time.

Massage. We unknowingly tense the muscles in our shoulders, neck, arms, legs, and hips while we drive, sit at a computer or engage in any stressful or contentious event. We need to find reliable ways to release this tension on a regular basis. Recent studies published by the NCCAM division of the National

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Institutes of Health show that massage helps people “reduce pain, promote relaxation and boost mood.” Swedish, deep tissue, and Tai Yoga massage will all help you reap these rewards, but there are other less costly ways to self-massage that can be done including using a foam roller, exercise balls, tennis balls, soft balls, and other hand-held devices.

Self soothing at work. Self-soothing techniques are easily taught in the workplace in small groups and large. Deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and meditation are experiential techniques that will yield immediate results. Try handing out biodot cards to help people realize that the techniques they are attempting to learn are actually working. Bringing in massage therapists to do free five minute massage chair sessions or a five minute foot massage is another way to introduce these modalities into the workplace.

Sleep

The average American gets 6.2 hours of sleep a night. Most sleep experts say we should get around 8 hours of sleep per night. The gap between these two numbers would suggest that insomnia is more common than anyone seems to realize. Sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome, and other physical ailments only account for about 50% of all cases of insomnia. The other 50% is usually attributed to stress.

The cause of stress-related insomnia is easily explained: Not enough sleep raises your cortisol levels. Cortisol is a stress hormone. Not surprisingly, increased levels of cortisol make it difficult to fall asleep at night. The higher your cortisol levels go the harder it is to fall asleep. Conversely, the less sleep you get the higher your cortisol levels go. This inverse relationship leads to a vicious cycle of sometimes endless insomnia. Practicing good sleep hygiene is typically used as the first line of defense against insomnia.

Sleep hygiene includes trying to go to bed at the same time every night, trying to get seven to eight hours of sleep a night, not doing work in the bedroom, keeping the room as dark as possible, keeping the temperature in the room down a bit, NOT watching TV or using hand-held devices like cell phones and iPads just before going to sleep and definitely not falling asleep with the TV on. Some of the experts even suggest not reading in bed (or at least not reading a “page-turner.”) Some suggest turning the clock around so you can’t see it. (OK to set the alarm to wake you up, though.)

Nobody knows quite why sleep is so important, *but rest assured*, it is. Certainly the body needs a period of rest, and the brain may need a period of rest to perform certain functions: Sleep may be the time when new neurons are formed, short term memories are transformed into long term memory and in REM sleep, where we actively dream, it may be the time where we consolidate (or file) new memories along with older ones.

After ruling out other causes for insomnia (like restless leg and sleep apnea), addressing the stress in your life, through all the means mentioned in this report, is probably going to help you reduce episodes of insomnia, too. Allowing at least four hours between exercising and going to bed, yoga at any point in the day, and a hot bath just before bed can help you fall asleep more easily. Meditation (particularly if your insomnia is the variety where you wake up in the middle of the night and have trouble going BACK to sleep) can help too. Most sleeping pills have side effects like grogginess and loss of REM sleep, which may be the most under-rated side effect of all, since not getting enough REM sleep may limit the consolidation and memory work described above.

Just remember that occasional sleeplessness is a SYMPTOM of stress as well as a SOURCE of stress. In other words, insomnia will cause you to feel stressed, but it also may be a sign that you are experiencing stress elsewhere. Insomnia, in 50% of cases, is a stress-related health concern.

Sleep at work. Various organizations across the United States are encouraging employees to take naps at work. Many are installing nap rooms or simply encouraging employees to find an empty conference room to go into and close the door. Almost everyone feels a dip in energy at some point after lunch and just about everyone self-medicates their way through this dip by drinking coffee. Encouraging workers NOT to self-medicate at these moments may ultimately prevent a life-long reliance on caffeine and will result in a less anxious, less jittery employee who is better able to focus and attend to his or her work in the long run. Short of actually encouraging napping at work, employers can certainly do their share to help raise awareness about the importance of getting enough sleep at night, practicing sleep hygiene and recommending other products that help people sleep. (See sleep CD described on page 40.)

Review

Exercise has so many health benefits that *Newsweek* proclaimed if it were available in pill form, everyone would take it. Whether

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

it's aerobic exercise like jogging, swimming, basketball or soccer, or something milder like brisk walking, raking leaves, or even playing ping pong, these forms of exercise all help lower stress, boost the immune system and help you sleep better at night.

Exercise at work. If you work in a large building, sometimes just hand delivering a report or getting some supplies from the other end of the building should provide a health benefit. Remember, the Surgeon General's recommendation for moderate exercise can be accomplished in three 10-minute segments of brisk walking each day, five days a week.

Yoga helps improve flexibility, balance, and reduces chronic pain. So much stress gets stored in the form of muscle tension that practicing yoga is almost imperative if you really want to conquer stress. Whether you take a few classes a week, or just create your own 10-minute routine that you practice every day, seriously consider making yoga a habit.

Yoga at work. Hire a yoga instructor to come into your facility to conduct classes before work starts. Workers can also be taught and encouraged to learn several basic postures that they can use to relieve back tension, neck tension, and shoulder tension at various points during their day. See the *Yoga@Work* video described on page 41.

Nutrition. Eating heavy, fried, fat-laden foods leaves you feeling sluggish and tired. Eating light, healthy carbs like salads and veggies will leave you feeling energized and ready to tackle the day. Few people take into account the side effects that an unhealthy diet has on their MENTAL health. (Usually we think of it only from the standpoint of our physical health.) Add in the effects of caffeine in making us jittery and anxious, and proper nutrition takes on a great deal of importance.

Nutrition at work can be addressed by offering healthier food choices available at vending machines and in the cafeteria. Some organizations have a day of the week where employees are encouraged to bring in a salad, and plastic resealable salad bowls are given away as incentives for doing so. Educating people about healthy food choices and reduced caffeine consumption can also help.

Self-soothing is simply a bunch of different techniques like deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, and body scan that you can use to ward off stress before or after it occurs.

Self-soothing at work. These techniques are easily taught in small groups and large. Deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation,

and meditation are experiential techniques that will yield immediate results. Try handing out biodot cards to help people realize that the techniques they are learning are actually working.

Sleep. Getting a good night's sleep is probably the most underrated method for reducing stress. People in the U.S. get on average 6.2 hours of sleep a night indicating that insomnia may actually be reaching epidemic proportions. All the methods in this section will contribute to reducing insomnia. Probably the most useful of all is meditation which can be used to help you fall asleep and fall BACK asleep when you wake up in the middle of the night.

Sleep at work. Various organizations across the U.S. are encouraging employees to take naps at work. Many are installing nap rooms or simply encouraging employees to find an empty conference room to go into and close the door.

Products

Mobile Device App: *My Fitness Pal.* Has the largest food database of any smart phone calorie counter (over 3,000,000 foods), and makes it easy to enter fast food dishes and track exercise too. Price: Free Available on iTunes and at Google Play.

Handout: *Biodot Pocket Guide.* This pocket guide teaches many of the same techniques recommended in this section such as deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation. Biodots also let you know if the self-soothing techniques you've chosen are actually working and the pocket guide explains how biofeedback works, too. Comes with five biodots on an 8-panel card that folds to the size of a credit card and can fit in a billfold: Can be used for health fairs, seminars, incentives, and as a promotional gift. Price: dependent on quantity ordered from \$.99–\$1.49 (Available from StressStop.com)

Pedometer. By emphasizing the importance of proactively walking a certain amount each day, no matter what the total count is, a pedometer tracks behavior and gives people a goal to shoot for that will likely improve their mood, increase their productivity, and decrease their stress. Prices range from \$2.35 to \$2.99 ea. (Available from StressStop.com)

CD: *Overcoming Stress-Related Insomnia.* In Part I of this CD, you'll learn how to identify the root causes of your stress-related insomnia and you'll learn over 20 useful tips for preparing for a restful night of sleep. In Part II you are guided into a deep state of rest as you listen to 25 minutes of soothing

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

narration (mixed with even more soothing music) designed to relax tension and release worrisome thoughts. Price: Depending on quantity ordered \$3–\$16. Download as a podcast or purchase CD. (Available from StressStop.com)

Training Video: *Yoga@Work*. Focusing almost entirely on the upper body, these easy-to-hold poses can all be done right in your chair at work. Each stretch is a one to two minute pose that can be practiced one-at-a-time or as part of a longer sequence with other stretches. Make this program available over a corporate website or Intranet and relaxation is only a click away. Price: \$195. (Available from StressStop.com)

Step 6. Attune

Attune is a term used to describe social support. Social support is universally viewed as an effective way to help you manage stress. The Mayo Clinic website agrees: “Having close friends and family has far-reaching benefits for your health. A strong social support network can be critical to help you through stressful challenges and tough times, whether that’s a bad day at work or a year filled with loss or chronic illness.”

The Mayo Clinic website goes on to say that social support can help you lower stress in the following ways:

- **Sense of belonging.** Spending time with people helps ward off loneliness. Whether it’s other new parents, dog lovers, fishing buddies or siblings, just knowing you’re not alone can go a long way toward coping with stress.
- **Increased sense of self-worth.** Having people who call you a friend reinforces the idea that you’re a good person to be around.
- **Feeling of security.** Your social network gives you access to information, advice, guidance, and other types of assistance should you need them. It’s comforting to know that you have people you can turn to in a time of need.

The word attune (or attunement) is also used to describe the brain science behind what happens when you really connect with anyone, but particularly someone in your social support network. It helps you understand how social support turns an interaction between two people into a health benefit.

“There’s an interpersonal emotional economy going on every time we have a social interaction,” writes Dr. Daniel Goleman, author of the books *Emotional Intelligence* and *Social Intelligence*. In other words, we sense what’s going on below the surface, but we aren’t always aware of this consciously. “Through this subconscious emotional exchange we have the ability to change another’s mood. I smile and you feel happy; I frown and you feel worried. I laugh and you feel good inside.”

“In short, we help (or harm) each other not just emotionally but at a biological level. Your hostility bumps up my blood pressure; your nurturing support lowers it.” This is what it means to be attuned. And this is at the heart of what it means to be a part of a social support network.

So attune, as we define it here, is more than just social support, which has been proven to reduce stress and increase resilience. Attune, as we use it here also includes attunement which involves relating to others and connecting in a deep way that typically releases neurotransmitters like oxytocin and dopamine in the brain. These feel-good chemicals are part of what makes it so rewarding to give and receive social support. And the only thing it really requires is to take the time to listen to what other people are saying and to try and connect with what they are trying to tell you.

Thus, attunement is NOT just some social courtesy we extend to others in order to be nice; it’s a way of connecting with people on a deep level that helps you as much as it helps them. How these connections are formed and how we nurture them has a surprising impact on our lives and on our personal success. The following five sub-steps will demonstrate exactly how you go about making these health-enhancing personal connections.

Call a friend

Find a mentor

Join a support group

Spend time building your most important relationships

Seek out counseling

Call a friend. This is a surprisingly simple way to reduce stress. Calling a friend, and more importantly, maintaining and cultivating your support network, is vital to your physical and mental health. According to the medical journal, *Psychiatry*,

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

“Overall it appears that positive social support of high quality can enhance your resilience to stress.” It can also help decrease the consequences from traumatic events, as well as reduce other health problems and help you live longer.

Every time you call an old friend—even if you are NOT under any particular form of stress—you are building your network. According to the Mayo Clinic website: “A social support network is something you can develop when you’re not under stress. It provides the comfort of knowing that your friends are there for you if you need them.”

In the book, *Preventive Stress Management In Organizations*, the authors write that “strong, healthy relationships are in themselves powerful protective factors for collective and individual well-being. Healthy relationships have a powerful buffering effect against the adverse effects of stress in organizations and have a remedial and therapeutic effect when people are hurting.”

Call a friend at work. The work environment is a place where many people spend the majority of their waking hours each week. Encouraging people to come together in friendly ways by creating opportunities to work as teams will help the company’s bottom line by helping workers learn to work cooperatively while simultaneously building a social support network for each member of the organization.

Find a mentor. In a 1994 study of mentoring, psychologist Dr. Jean Rhodes defined mentoring relationships as requiring the following four attributes:

1. You can count on this person to be there for you.
2. He or she believes in or cares deeply about you.
3. He or she inspires you to do your best.
4. Knowing him or her has really influenced you and the choices you make.

Finding a mentor in your work environment can expedite your personal growth and your success in business. In the book, *Well-Being*, by Tom Rath and Jim Harter, the authors suggest you “Identify someone with a shared mission who encourages your growth.” This perfectly describes the role of a mentor. Authors Rath and Harter consider this one of the three key ingredients to achieving career success.

In the book, *Preventive Stress Management In Organizations*, the authors write, “Mentors can provide many valuable sources of support, including information on the political climate of the organization and modeling of appropriate behavior. Mentoring should be rewarded by the organization, and experienced employees should be encouraged to serve as mentors.”

Find a mentor at work. Authors of the book, *Well-Being*, see this as a critical step to career success. Organizations that wind up on the lists of best places to work often have mentoring programs built in. Teledyne Brown Engineering, for example, which won a Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award has a mentoring program that “matches junior employees with senior employees to ensure transfer of job knowledge.”

Join a support group. We know that lack of social support leads to ill-health and increased stress. According to the *Journal of Psychiatry*, “Low social support has been associated with heightened stress reactivity, including elevated heart rate, increased blood pressure and exaggerated cardiovascular responses to laboratory stressors.” The same article concludes by noting: “The protective effects of having access to rich and functional social networks [helps maintain] physical and psychological health.”

Dr. David Spiegel, of Stanford University, who has been doing research into the effect of support groups on cancer patients for decades, agrees. In an article published on the Stanford University website, he is quoted as saying that “It remains ‘very clear’ that support groups provide great benefits to cancer patients and should be an important part of treatment.”

There are support groups for every imaginable type of problem. Call your local hospital, and you will find support groups for a variety of health issues from cancer to diabetes. Churches and local health agencies have support groups for people trying to deal with a variety of addictions from smoking to gambling. And there are government and online support groups for single people, married people, people with small children, etc.

“Effective support systems are also needed with work organizations,” write the authors of the book *Preventive Stress Management In Organizations*. Social support can help with skill building, resource management, and of course stress management. “When our emotional needs are not met, we become preoccupied [and stressed] with the particular need deprivation we are experiencing. If we get the emotional support we need at work, then such need deprivation may not be a driving force for our behavior.”

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Join a support group at work. On the job, a support group might be known as a workplace action committee. In any workplace, the people who lead these committees are often those who “champion” a particular cause, whether it’s trying to solve a common ergonomic problem or safety issue or encouraging people to meditate or practice yoga at work. These action groups can often be formed with the blessing of management because they provide not only social support for the members of the group, but real benefits to the organization itself.

Spend time building your most important relationships. In the book, *Well-Being*, the authors write about a fascinating 30-year longitudinal study of over 12,000 people conducted by researchers at Harvard. The study found that “your odds of being happy increase by 15% if a direct connection in your network is happy.” This same study shows that an increase of \$10,000 in your annual income only results in a 2% increase in happiness. The authors draw the conclusion from two related findings that *your friendships are significantly more important than money in creating happiness*. Dr. Nicholas Christakis, who was one of the researchers in that Harvard study agrees: “People are embedded in social networks and the health and well-being of one person affects the health and well-being of others.”

In an article published in *Psychology Today*, Dr. John Gottman writes that the key to a successful, long-term relationship is learning how to argue with your significant other: “Happily married couples use certain phrases and actions during an argument that prevent negativity from spiraling out of control. In effect, these conciliatory gestures act as a glue that helps to hold the marriage together during tense times.” In the same article Gottman offers the following four rules for communicating during an argument that could be used in organizations as successfully as it has been used marriages:

1. Try to make comments about the communication process itself, such as “Please let me finish,” or “We’re getting off the topic,” or “That remark hurts.”
2. Comment on what’s happening while it’s taking place, not afterward.
3. Remind your [co-worker or boss] that you admire or empathize with them despite the conflict.
4. Use phrases such as “Yes, I see,” “Uh huh,” or “Go on.” These are little psychological strokes that stabilize the conversation.

Spend quality time talking and listening. There is no question about the health benefits that long-term relationships have on our well-being. But in order to reap these benefits, one must invest the time it takes to adequately cultivate them. Here again, look at the Time Management Matrix on page 16. Don’t allow your long-term relationships to be casualties of THE TYRANNY OF THE URGENT. In other words, don’t let the urgent things in your life prevent you from setting aside time for your most important relationships. When you take time from quadrant 4 and invest it in quadrant 2 *You will live longer, be less likely to get depressed, suffer less anxiety and be more resilient to stress as a result.*

Spend time building your most important relationships at work. No doubt, as far as your mental health is concerned, building your relationship with your immediate supervisor can have tremendous benefits. Since a bad relationship with your boss can be toxic to your health, it stands to reason that building a good relationship is definitely worth the effort. Don’t expect this investment to NECESSARILY result in a buddy-buddy relationship. It’s probably much more realistic to expect that this investment of time would result in a feeling of mutual respect.

Seek out counseling. When dealing with serious issues, this realm of social support can be invaluable. Deciding what kind of therapy you choose may not be as important as the actual therapist chosen. According to the book, *Mindfulness And Psychotherapy*, research shows that “the superiority of one method over another is rather weak; most forms of treatment work as well as most other forms of treatment.”

The authors go on to say that “the most potent predictors of a positive treatment outcome are related to the qualities of the therapist and the therapeutic relationship. Needless to say, therapists differ from one another, and these differences are likely to be more important to the treatment outcomes than the particular treatment method or the theory embraced by the therapist.” The authors conclude “overall, empathy accounts for as much and probably more outcome variance than does the specific intervention.”

So when you seek out counseling ask to talk with your therapist ahead of time, as a *preview of coming attractions* and to see if you connect with this person, feel comfortable with him or her and see if you think you can form an *alliance* with this person. Check to see if they can listen intently and offer advice without seeming like they are the all-knowing expert. These qualities help you forge a

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

bond with your therapist and it's this patient/therapist-alliance that will help you reap the benefits from this form of social support.

Seek out counseling at work. Many organizations have EAP programs and the central feature of most EAPs is to provide counseling for physical and mental health issues. Surprisingly, these free services are often only used by a small percentage of the employee population (usually about 5% or less). According to the authors of the book, *Preventive Stress Management In Organizations*, "For some, a stigma continues to be associated with counseling and psychotherapy. Another fear that sometimes inhibits the development of an effective counseling program is concern about the maintenance of confidentiality. The issue of confidentiality may be significant enough to necessitate outsourcing this service to an external agency."

Review

Call a friend. Research shows that social support helps you increase your resilience to stress. Every time you call a friend, not only will you improve your odds of handling the stress in your life well, you are building your support network. So whether times are stressful or not, maintaining ties with old friends can help you maintain your equilibrium when you are challenged.

Call a friend at work. The work environment is a community where many people spend the majority of their waking hours each week. Encouraging people to come together in friendly ways by creating opportunities for team-building will help the company's bottom line by helping workers build a social support network.

Find a mentor. A mentor is usually a person who is older and who shares some of the same interests as you. Mentors are easier to find than you might think. Older people love to share their insights and help others who are beginning their careers. Don't be afraid to ask any person you think might be able to help you in this way.

Find a mentor at work. Authors of the book *Well-Being* see this as a critical step to career success. Organizations that wind up on the lists of best places to work often have mentoring programs built in.

Join a support group. If you have a physical or mental health issue, like cancer or a drug or alcohol problem, support groups may prove invaluable. Hospitals, churches, and community support groups come in just about every conceivable shape and form in order to help people cope with major life issues.

Join a support group at work. On the job, support groups are also known as workplace action committees. In any workplace, the people who lead these committees are often those who "champion" a particular cause whether it's trying to solve a common ergonomic problem or safety issue or encouraging fellow employees to meditate or practice yoga. These action groups can often be formed with the blessing of management in that they provide not only social support for the members of the group, but real benefits for the organization itself.

Spend time building your most important relationships. Don't be hypnotized by the tyranny of the urgent into thinking you don't have the time to nurture and cultivate your most important relationships. Remember the Time Management Matrix from Step 2. Steal time from quadrant 2 activities like TV-watching and use it to spend time talking and listening to your significant other.

Spend time building your most important relationships at work. No doubt, as far as your mental health is concerned, building a strong relationship with your immediate supervisor can have tremendous benefits. Since a bad relationship with your boss can be toxic, it stands to reason that building a good relationship is definitely worth the effort.

Seek out counseling. People used to have a stigma about seeking out counseling and fortunately that misguided notion is quickly disappearing because everyone, no matter how mentally healthy they are, can greatly benefit from it. Remember to form an alliance with a counselor who you find supportive and wise, and the results of your therapy are much more likely to be long-lasting.

Seek out counseling at work. Many organizations have EAP programs and the central feature of most EAPs is to provide counseling for physical and mental health issues. Surprisingly, these free services are often under-used. Confidentiality in EAPs is always assured.

Products And Services

Handout: *The State of Friendship in America*. Most people think they want a lot of friends, but Getlifeboat.com contends that what people really need is a smaller group (say no more than would fit in a small life boat) of *really close friends*. This handout shows that what we thought in high school about friends and what we NEED as adults turns out to be exactly the opposite. Price: FREE (available from Getlifeboat.com)

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Mobile Device App: *CaringBridge.org* is an online destination for giving or receiving social support. With 500,000 visits a day, anyone with any need for social support, or desire to give it to a person who is genuinely in need can go and log in, create a website or visit other's websites. A bit like Facebook but strictly for the purpose of giving and receiving social support. Price: FREE.

Website: *Healthfinder.gov*. One website where you can go to find all kinds of support groups for all kinds of health and behavioral health issues from anxiety to fibromyalgia.

Training Video: *Demonstrating Emotional Intelligence*. Learn the subtle art of attunement, reading facial expressions, and understand how our emotions are contagious, much like the common cold. Learn how “feel good” chemicals in the brain help you sync up with others and encourage rapport. Learn how to apply the basics of both emotional and social intelligence into the real world of work. Training kit comes with PowerPoint, leader's guide and bonus materials. Length: 15 minutes. Price: \$295. (Available from StressStop.com)

Part IV: Taking The Six Steps

This six step stress prevention model is about empowering workers one person at a time. But it is also about empowering whole organizations. These six steps can transform any organization from the top down or the bottom up. That's the beauty of this model. It encourages individuals to “be the change you want to see in this world,” but it also can encourage senior management to make these changes too. They can model these six steps, endorse these six steps or better yet, implement them from the top down.

Research tells us that the health of the individual affects the health of the organization and vice versa. The authors of the book *Creating Healthy Workplaces* agree: “A large and increasing body of research has identified workplace stress as a major factor in employee well-being and health. There is [also] the increasing realization that individual health contributes to organizational health and organizational health contributes to individual health.”

Just as importantly, the authors of *Creating Healthy Workplaces* go on to say: “Health should no longer be defined by the LACK OF ILLNESS but by the presence of joy, virtues, generosity, psychological capital, and peak performance.” Attacking stress proactively is all about creating a vibrant and healthy workplace. It is what separates the six step model from standard stress prevention which—as it is usually practiced in most

organizations—only deals with stress at the symptom level and the disease management level and then *CALLS THIS (secondary and tertiary) PREVENTION!*

By adopting and promoting this six step model you as a wellness professional are agreeing that there has to be a better way to manage stress at both an individual level and on an organizational level. That stress related illness can not only be largely prevented, but that it can be replaced with a higher quality of living that will ultimately lead to increased productivity, improved focus, better communication, better judgment, and better relationships between management and employees and between co-workers that absolutely will help the company's bottom line.

There is a quotation earlier in this report from Dr. Dean Ornish, which bears repeating here: “Just as your mind affects your body, so does your body affect your mind. When your body is more relaxed, your mind feels less stressed.” This is what this model is all about. This is what it means when we talk about INSIDE OUT STRESS MANAGEMENT. By creating a resilient body and mind that can (to quote Shakespeare) deflect “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” we *prevent* stress at every step in this six step model:

Step 1: Assess is about identifying the true sources of your distress. Knowing what it is you want to change is where prevention begins. Most people (and organizations) have only a vague notion of what it is that is stressing them. Even the term stress tends to disguise the real problems lurking beneath it like time pressure, financial problems, poor communication, relationship problems, and unsafe working conditions.

Step 2: Avoid unnecessary stress. There's just so much stress we create ourselves (or that is created for us) that is unnecessary. Careful planning, delegation, and time management eliminate a lot of this unnecessary stress. *This step is pure prevention.*

Step 3: Appraise. Changing your appraisal during a stressful situation stops stress before it starts. Our appraisals of situations, both in regards to HOW difficult the situation is and how capable we are of handling it, often turn out to be faulty. We can prevent a great deal of our stress by first realizing this tendency and then changing our appraisal when it's inaccurate.

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Step 4: Accept the stress you can't avoid or reappraise. Worries about the future and regrets about the past cause us a great deal of stress. Learning how to mindfully stay in and accept the present moment for what it is, will prevent stress.

Step 5: Activate prevents stress to the degree that it is practiced proactively. When you layer flexibility training, aerobic exercise, and relaxation techniques onto a body that is well rested and well fed, you will really start to feel how this six-step prevention model works from the inside out! When your body feels good, it's much, much harder for your mind to feel stressed.

Step 6: Attune. Every time you genuinely connect with another person, you experience attunement which is the feel good chemical signature in your brain for the act of engaging in any kind of social support, whether you are on the giving end or receiving end of that support. Every person you add to your social support network is like adding another trestle under your bridge. With each trestle you add, the bridge keeps getting stronger and stronger and you can carry more and more load. *That's the ultimate form of stress prevention.*

Ways To Incorporate These Six Steps At Work

Here are some suggestions for how to implement these ideas in the workplace.

Step 1: Assess. Take surveys, hand out questionnaires, distribute stress assessments. Provide incentives for completing assessments like a drawing for a weekend getaway. Consider using electronic stress assessments that can give you aggregate feedback. Create focus groups. Keep track of the indicators of organizational stress like absenteeism, tardiness, accidents, and productivity. Just paying attention to this problem may bring about a shift in consciousness: So use this step to raise awareness about stress through newsletters, emails, and bulletin boards. Put out suggestion boxes and ask for any ideas on how the organization can reduce stress.

Step 2: Avoid. Teach time management, delegation, and planning skills to all workers. Have a contest and award a prize to any person who can come up with a method for saving the most time, reducing the most stress, or eliminating unnecessary

paperwork or extra steps in any commonly done procedure at your workplace. Encourage people to keep a log of their stress for at least a week, preferably two, so that they see what stress is unnecessary or avoidable. Persuade people to download apps and use day planners on their phone. Institutionalize five minutes of planning for everyone at the start of every day. Encourage employees to make a list of the six most important things they need to do that day. Give prizes and awards for employees who turn in copies of weekly and monthly plans by certain deadlines. Every month, create a delegation prize for the most creative idea for delegating a job at home for little or no money to someone else. Offer assertiveness training classes for people who don't know how to say no.

Step 3: Appraise. Teach cognitive restructuring in the workplace. First make employees aware of the power of negative self-talk. Try having people do something silly—yet harmless—like the hokey pokey and then ask people to describe their self-talk just prior to doing the exercise. Many people HATE to do stuff that they perceive as “goofy” and will be happy to report on their negative self-talk in relationship to doing this activity. Or ask people to do trust exercises, like falling back into someone's arms and ask people what their self-talk was around that. Usually exercises like this reveal the power of negative self-talk: How it keeps us from doing very simple things.

Also, help people recognize their own irrational thinking. Promote the $A + B = C$ equation in newsletters and emails and on bulletin boards. Get T-shirts made with the $A + B = C$ equation on it and give them out as prizes. Award a T-shirt as a prize for the best cognitive restructure (or reframe) at work for every week or month. Create a wall where people can write their own irrational beliefs and their reframes on it. Hand out flyers and brochures on cognitive restructuring. Put an interactive online program called *Thinking Well* (see resources listed on page 26) on your intranet that teaches the $A + B = C$ equation.

Step 4: Accept. Teach mindfulness techniques. Bring a mindfulness-based stress reduction course into your facility. Allow people to take meditation breaks. Do mindful eating exercises where you give people a raisin and make them take about five minutes to mindfully eat it. Create a meditation room. Promote mindfulness in emails, newsletters and on posters. Have a mindfulness retreat day on a Saturday where you teach mindfulness meditation, mindful walking, and mindful eating. Teach people how to pay attention on purpose. Introduce the concept of flow, and encourage people to submit ideas about

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

tasks that generate flow. Have Friday flow days where people are allowed to set aside at least one or two blocks of uninterrupted time to work on their most important projects. No checking phones or emails during this time!

Step 5: Activate. Hand out pedometers, encourage workers to use the stairs. Put up signs in the most far away spaces in the parking lot that say: Reserved for ACTIVE employees only (or something similar). Put a sign on the elevator that reminds people to use the stairs instead. Put up posters that remind people to walk 10 minutes during lunch. Bring chair-massage into the workplace twice a year. Give away a prize to people who do a certain number of steps every day for a month. Do programs on the importance of sleep. Encourage napping at work. Have a relaxation break room. Fill it with self-massage items like foam rollers, and other inexpensive hand massagers. Bring in a yoga instructor once a week. Offer incentives to people who attend five sessions. Check out the *Yoga@Work* DVD that allows people to do yoga sitting in a chair and put it on your website (see resources section on page 41). Other simple things you may be able to do to encourage physical activity is to create walking trails on or near company property; provide bike racks and support and/or promote 5K walk/runs in the community.

Step 6: Attune. Teach people the importance of social support. Encourage employees to use EAP services if you have them and/or go to HR whenever there is a problem. Set up mentors for new hires and create support groups or action committees for certain stress-related work issues that have been identified through surveys and questionnaires. Create a discretionary fund for employees in crisis that is supported by small donations from other employees. Encourage workers to reach out in the community for charity runs that the company can sponsor. Teach employees the fine art of listening: See the video *Demonstrating Emotional Intelligence* (see the resources section on page 45).

References

1. American Psychological Association. *Psychologically Healthy Workplace Awards*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2009. Print.
2. *Ask a UT Psychologist (emotional Well-being)* -- James Pennebaker. Perf. James Pennebaker. *YouTube.com*. University of Texas at Austin, 01 Aug. 2011. Web. 8 Mar. 2014.
3. Barker, Joanne. "Turn Down Negative Self-Talk." *Webmd.com*. WebMD, 21 Jan. 2013. Web. 8 Mar. 2014.
4. Bennet, Hillary. "Stress Risk Assessment: The Key to Tackling Stress in the Workplace." *Hrinz.org.nz*. Psych Assessments. Web.
5. Biron, Caroline, Ronald J. Burke, and Cary L. Cooper, eds. *Creating Healthy Workplaces: Stress Reduction, Improved Well-being, and Organizational Effectiveness*. Surrey: Gower, 2014. Print.
6. Cromie, William J. "Meditation Changes Temperatures: Mind Controls Body in Extreme Experiments." *News.harvard.edu*. Harvard Gazette, 18 Apr. 2002. Web. 6 Feb. 2014.
7. Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life*. New York: Basic, 1997. Print.
8. De Kloet, E. R., and Florian Holsboer. "Stress and the Brain: From Adaptation to Disease." *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 6 (2005): 463-75. *Nature.com*. Nature Publishing Group, 13 May 2005. Web.
9. *Ellen Langer on Mindfulness*. Perf. Ellen Langer. *Youtube.com*. Seeing the Roses, 6 May 2011. Web.
10. Ellis, Albert, and Arthur Lange. *How to Keep People From Pushing Your Buttons*. New York: Carol Group, 1994. Print.
11. Epstein, Robert. "Fight the Frazzled Mind." *Scientific American Mind* Sept.-Oct. 2011: 30-35. Print.
12. Everly, George S., Jr., and Jefferey M. Lating. *A Clinical Guide to the Treatment of the Human Stress Response*. 3rd ed. New York: Springer, 2013. Print.
13. Ferriss, Timothy. *The 4-Hour Workweek*. New York: Crown, 2007. Print.
14. Fleming, Stephen. "What Does Dopamine Actually Do?" *Psychologytoday.com*. Sussex Publishers, 30 Dec. 2012. Web. 25 Jan. 2014.
15. Germer, Christopher K., Ronald D. Siegel, and Paul R. Fulton, eds. *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy*. New York: Guilford, 2005. Print.
16. Goleman, Daniel. *Emotional Intelligence*. 10th Anniversary ed. New York: Bantam, 2005. Print.
17. Goleman, Daniel. *Social Intelligence*. New York: Bantam, 2006. Print.
18. Gottman, John, and Nan Silver. "What Makes a Marriage Work?" *Psychologytoday.com*. *Psychology Today*, 1 Mar. 1994. Web. 8 Mar. 2014.
19. Hadfield, Chris. *An Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth*. New York: Little, Brown, 2013. Print.
20. Hafen, Brent Q., Keith J. Karren, Kathryn J. Frandsen, and N. Lee Smith. *Mind/Body Health: The Effects of Attitudes, Emotions, and Relationships*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996. Print.
21. Kilfedder, Catherine, Kevin Power, Thanos Karatzias, Aileen McCafferty, Karen Niven, Zoe Chouliara, and Lisa Galloway. "A Randomized Trial of Face-to-Face Counselling versus Telephone Counselling versus Bibliotherapy for Occupational Stress." *Bpsjournals.co.uk*. The British Psychological Society, 2010. Web.
22. Kuchment, Anna. "On Your Marks..." *Newsweek* 26 Mar. 2007: 56-59. Print.
23. Kulze, Ann G. *Eat Right for Life*. Omaha: Wellness Council of America, 2010. Print.
24. Langer, Ellen J. *Mindfulness*. Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1989. Print.
25. Lazarus, Clifford N. "Give Yourself Credit by Not Blaming Others." *Psychologytoday.com*. *Psychology Today*, 27 Feb. 2011. Web. 28 Jan. 2014.

STRESS@WORK: THE ART & SCIENCE OF BUILDING A RESULTS-ORIENTED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

26. Lee, David. "Employee Stress and Performance." *Humannatureatwork.com*. HumanNature@Work, 2008. Web.
27. Lehrer, Jonah. *How We Decide*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009. Print.
28. Lutz, Joshua. "The Art of Being Mindful." *Time Magazine* 3 Feb. 2014: 40-46. Print.
29. Marshall, Judi, and Cary L. Cooper, eds. *Coping with Stress at Work*. Hants: Gower, 1981. Print.
30. Mayo Clinic Staff. "Positive Thinking: Stop Negative Self-Talk to Reduce Stress." *Mayoclinic.org*. Mayo Clinic, 4 Mar. 2014. Web. 8 Mar. 2014.
31. Miller, Lyle H. "The Business Case for Corporate Stress Assessment and Intervention." *Stressdirections.com*. The Stress Knowledge Company. Web.
32. Miller, Michael C. "Exercise Is a State of Mind." *Newsweek* 26 Mar. 2007: 48-55. Print.
33. Nagarathna, R., and H. R. Nagendra. "Yoga for Bronchial Asthma." *Bmj.com*. *British Medical Journal*, 19 Oct. 1985. Web. 8 Mar. 2014.
34. Ornish, Dean. *The Spectrum*. New York: Ballantine, 2008. Print.
35. Ozbay, Faith, Douglas C. Johnson, Eleni Dimoulas, C. A. Morgan, III., Dennis Charney, and Steven Southwick. "Social Support and Resilience to Stress." *Ncbi.nlm.nih.gov*. National Institute of Health, May 2007. Web. 10 Feb. 2014.
36. Pelaez, Marina W. "Plan Your Way to Less Stress, More Happiness." *Time*. Time Inc, 31 May 2011. Web. 19 Jan. 2014.
37. Purcell, Maud. "The Health Benefits of Journaling." *PsychCentral.com*. Pysch Central. Web. 8 Mar. 2014.
38. Quick, James C., Debra L. Nelson, and Jonathan D. Quick. *Stress and Challenge at the Top: The Paradox of the Successful Executive*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1990. Print.
39. Quick, James C., Lawrence R. Murphy, and Joseph J. Hurrell, Jr., eds. *Stress & Well-Being at Work*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1992. Print.
40. Quick, James C., Thomas A. Wright, Joyce A. Adkins, Debra L. Nelson, and Jonathan D. Quick. *Preventive Stress Management in Organizations*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2013. Print.
41. Ratey, John J. *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*. New York: Little, Brown, 2008. Print.
42. Rath, Tom, and Jim Harter. *Well Being: The Five Essential Elements*. New York: Gallup, 2010. Print.
43. Richardson, Katherine M., and Hannah R. Rothstein. "Effects of Occupational Stress Management Intervention Programs: A Meta-Analysis." *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 1st ser. 13 (2008): 69-93. American Psychology Association, 2008. Web.
44. Siegel, Daniel J. *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*. New York: Bantam, 2010. Print.
45. Siegel, Ronald D. *The Mindful Solution: Everyday Practices for Everyday Problems*. New York: Guilford, 2010. Print.